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KARNATAKA

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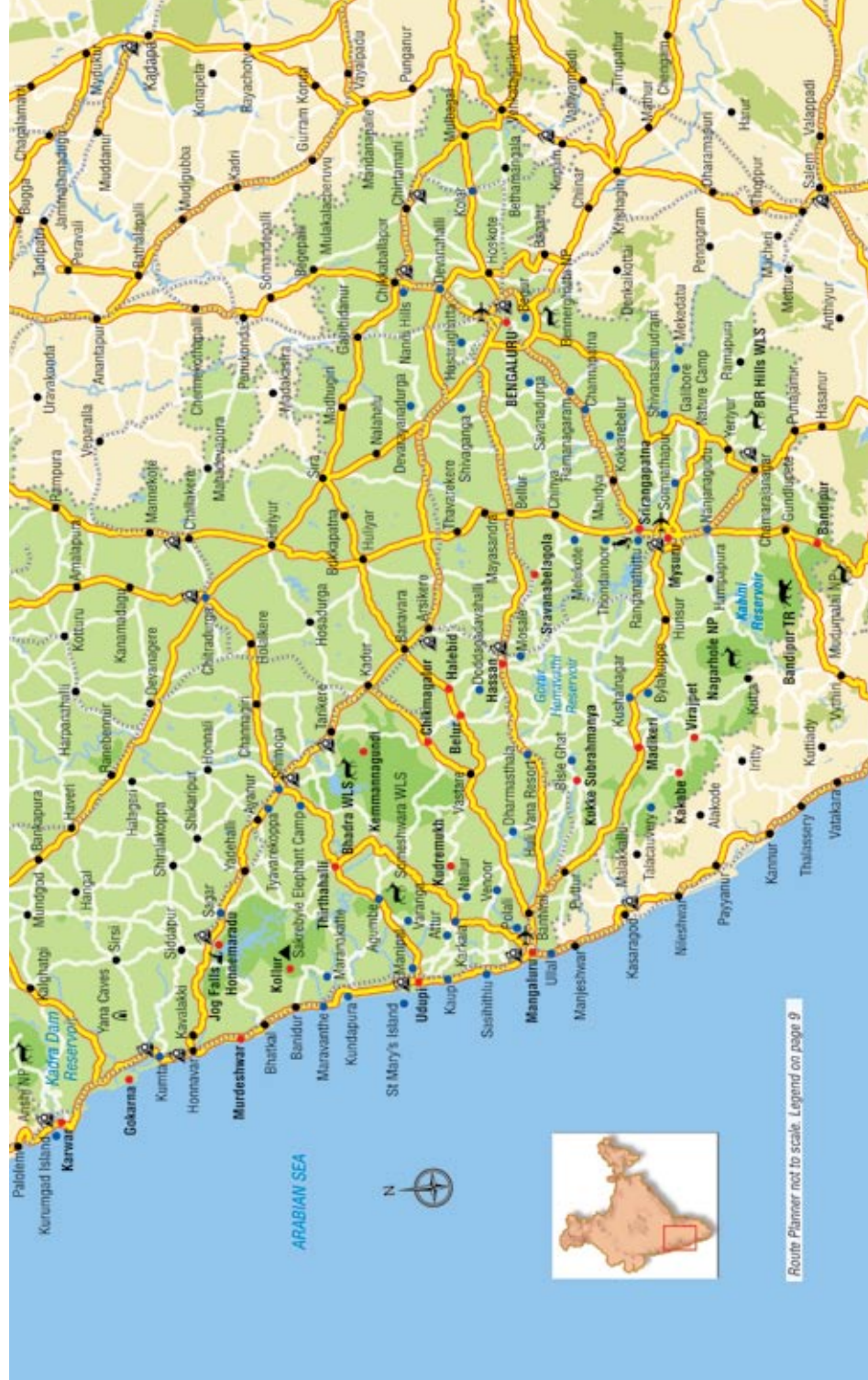
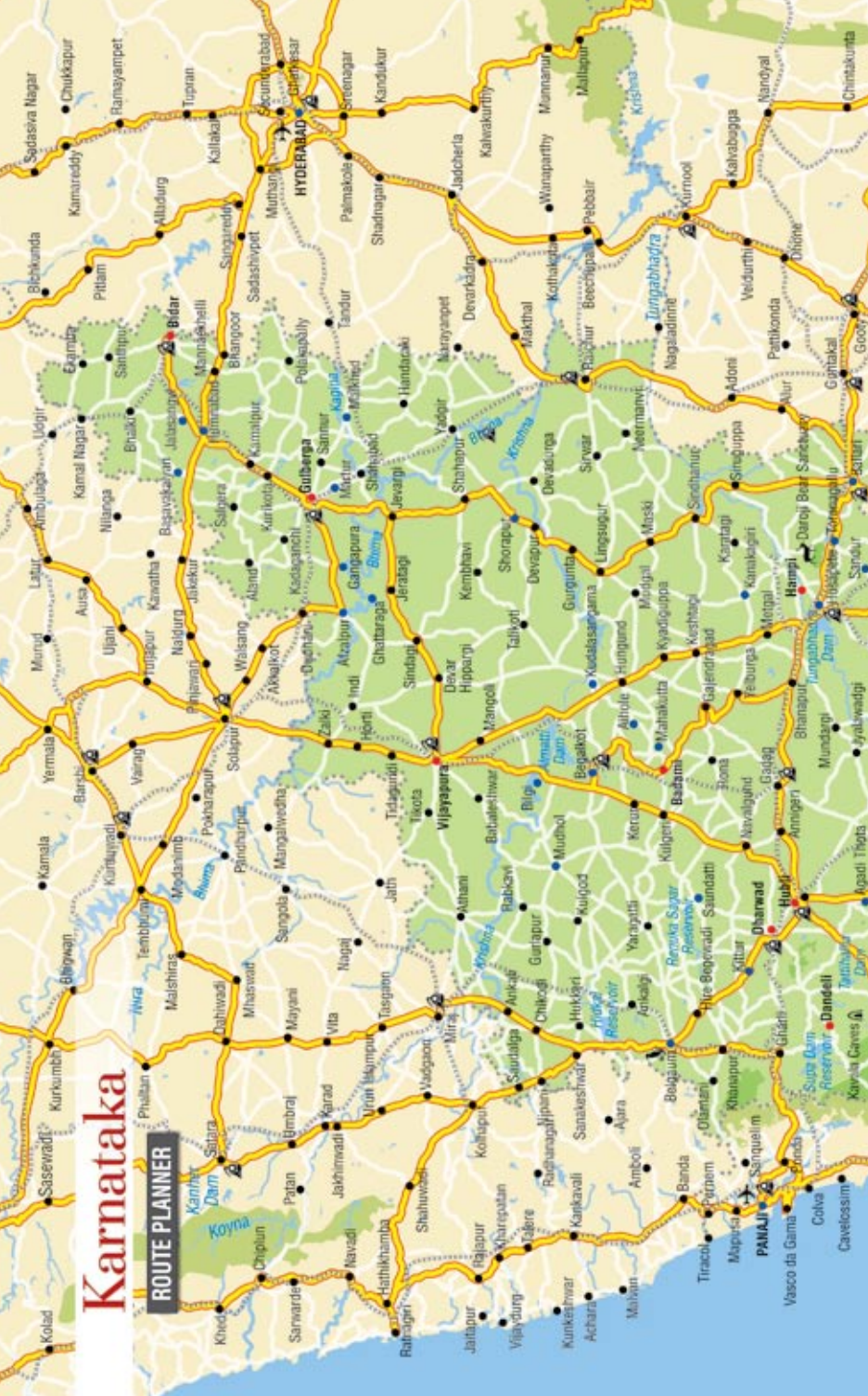
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Karnataka

ROUTE PLANNER





OUTLOOK ARCHIVES

INTRODUCING KARNATAKA

■ ANURAG MALLICK AND
PRIYA GANAPATHY

Lapped by the Arabian Sea on its west, Karnataka lies on the tableland where the Western and Eastern Ghats unite into the Nilgiri hill cluster. The name Karnataka is derived from 'Karunadu' or 'black land', referring to its bountiful black earth. Stretching roughly 750km from north to south and 400km east to west, the state is spread over 1,91,976 sq km; this is the sixth largest state by area in the

country and the eighth largest by population. Though declared a state after Mysore State was renamed as recently as November 1, 1973 (celebrated as Kannada Rajyotsava), Karnataka's recorded history goes back two millennia.

History and Mythology

Karnataka is the **fountainhead of the Cauvery**, one of India's most important rivers. Mythology says that goddess Cauvery forsook sage Agastya to flow as a river for the benefit of mankind. Here, goddess Chamundi (or

Karnataka during monsoons

Durga) slew the buffalo demon Mahishasura, giving Mysuru (Mahish-ooru) its name.

Karnataka is a land blessed by the footprints of Lord Rama, who met Hanuman and raised his *vanara sena* at the monkey kingdom of Kishkindha on the banks of the Pampa (Tungabhadra) in present-day Hampi. While crossing over from Kodagu to Kerala and on the coast, Lakshmana shot arrows into mountains to create perennial streams and waterfalls that bear his name. Ravana's inability to carry away the *atmalinga* to

Lanka spawned five Shiva shrines on the coast around Gokarna. This is the hallowed land where Lord Krishna turned around to reveal himself to his ardent devotee Kanakadasa in Udupi (even today, the *darshan* of the idol is from a window behind the temple). Badami celebrates the famous legend of sage Agastya consuming the demons Vatapi and Ilvala, while tales recount the travels of the Pandavas to the south.

Karnataka has witnessed the **rise and fall of empires**. It was here that Emperor Chandragupta Maurya spent the later years of his life as a Jain ascetic and died in Shravanabelgola around 298BCE. Dynasties from the Mauryas to the Satavahanas, Kadambas of Banavasi, Gangas of Talakadu, Chalukyas of Badami, Hoysalas of Dwarasamudra (Halebidu), Rashtrakutas, Vijayanagara kings, the Bahmani and Vijayapura Sultans and the Nayakas have ruled these lands. The Wodeyars of Mysuru, hailed as India's longest dynasty, were succeeded by Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan and even the Mughals fought for control over this terrain. Legendary travellers Ibn Batuta, Nicolo Conti and Ptolemy have chronicled how flourishing sea trade and the ancient Hampi Bazaar lured people to these shores from foreign lands, including the Greeks, Arabs, Portuguese, Dutch, French and the British. Their legacy of

monuments still evoke awe. It is a great experience to see the rich architectural heritage of this state.

Geography

Karnataka's sheer geographical diversity makes it exceptional—the mysterious desert tract of Talakadu with monuments buried in sand; giant limestone formations at Yana near Sirsi; the stalactites and stalagmites of Kavala Caves near Dandeli; the stunning peach-hued sandstone ridges of Badami; the precariously perched natural granite boulders of Ramnagaram (legendary backdrop for the movie *Sholay*); the bouldering and rock-climbing haven of Hampi, Shivagange,

and Kolar. Then there are the dense forests and mountains of the Western Ghats or Sahyadris—from Baba Budan Giri, the birthplace of coffee in India, to Agumbe, Kodachadri, Kemmangundi, and Kudremukh.

All of these features collectively make Karnataka one of the global hotspots of **biodiversity**. Birdwatchers and wildlife enthusiasts flock to world-famous parks such as the Dandeli, Nagarahole, Bandipur, and Kabini. Fringing the Western Ghats are pristine beaches lined with forests and laterite cliffs.

The Karavali coast stretches 320km from Mangaluru to Karwar called **the Sapphire Route**, one of the most scenic coastal drives in India. A magical boat ride on a moonlit night in Karwar inspired the poet Rabindranath Tagore to pen his first play 'Prokritir Protishodh' (Nature's Revenge). Adding intrigue are the islands off the coast—the tortoise-shaped Kurumgad near Karwar; the fine dive site Netrani Island off Murudeshwara; and St. Mary's Island near Malpe with fantastic basalt formations.

Sunny beaches at Malpe, Kaup, Baindoor, Murudeshwara, Maravanthe, Kumta, and Gokarna come with spectacular mountains to the east.

Literature and Legacy

Karnataka is hailed as the land of poets, philosophers, and saints. Many throng this state for its



Coffee plucking at Coorg

coastal **Pilgrim Route**—from Mangaluru, via Udupi, Honnavar, Murudeshwara, and Idagunji to Gokarna. The great *acharyas* Shankara, Ramanuja, and Madhava taught here. Reformers like Sri Basaveshwara, mathematicians like Bhaskaracharya, writers Pampa, Harihara, and Kumara Vyasa have enriched the heritage of Karnataka. Schools of thought flourished in Sringeri, Udupi, Dharmasthala, Gokarna, Katil, Kollur, Kukke Subramanya, Moodabidri, and Melukote. Kannada literature has the honour of producing the most (eight) Jnanpith award winners in India.

Arts and Crafts

Hailed as India's **sandalwood** capital (which also gives the Kannada film industry its name),

Karnataka is also renowned for its silk production, *agarbathi* (incense sticks), areca nut, coffee, honey, spices like pepper and cardamom. The state has unique and thriving handicrafts such as sandalwood carving from Mysuru, lacquerware from Channapatna, Bidri work from Bidar, Kinhalakale (wooden toys), and vibrant handlooms such as Ilkal and Kasuti saris, all of which are great souvenirs.

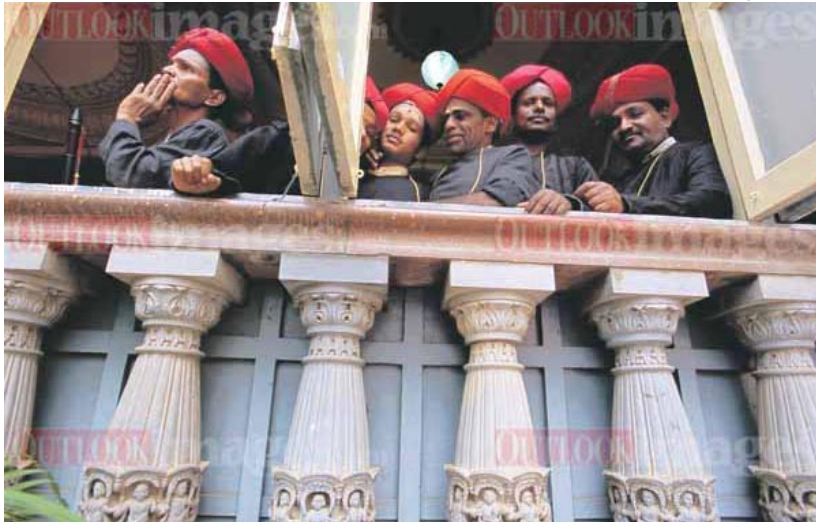
Food and Festivals

From Bidadi *thatte idli* to Maddur *vada* and Davangere Benne Dosa to Kundapur chicken, Karnataka is a culinary heavyweight. It has signature *tindi* (snacks), savouries and sweetmeats like Mysore Pak, Dharwad *peda*, Belgaum *kunda*; and the famous Coorgi *pandi*.

Intricately carved sandalwood idols



SAIBAL DAS



Artists participate in a Dasara procession at Mysore

The state's **diverse cuisine** is best enjoyed at homestays in Kodagu (Coorg) and Malnad, besides Lingayat *khanavalis*, Gowda '*ragi mudde-saaru*' restaurants, Sauji eateries, Reddy messes, and military hotels.

Karnataka's pulsating **cultural vibrancy** is typically experienced in its many grand festivals — from the pomp and glory of Dasara in Mysuru to the street

fervour of Bengaluru Karaga and Ganesh Chaturthi, the visual spectacle of Hampi Utsav and Vasanta Habba. Art and culture showcases include Chitra Sante and regular *nad habbas* (folk festivals). The state is the cradle of Indian classical music legends Gangubai Hangal, Bhimsen Joshi, and Mallikarjun Mansur, while also playing host to the biggest rock bands, musicians, and DJs from around the world.

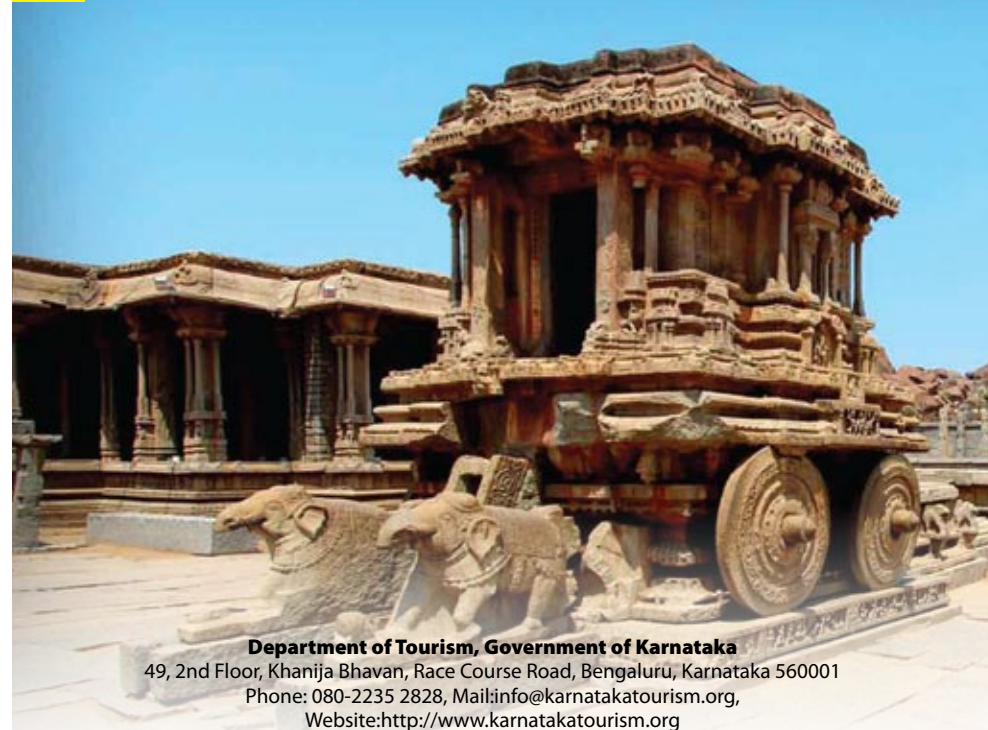
The capital **Bengaluru** has an extraordinarily multi-cultural universe. The city has had many crowns, evolving from 'Garden City' and 'Pensioner's Paradise' to 'India's Silicon Valley' and 'Pub Capital'. Living up to its tagline, Karnataka is truly 'one state, many worlds', allowing each to find their own story. ■

Gold Rush

Rich in mineral wealth, Karnataka has to its credit one of the oldest Geological Survey Departments in the country, started as far back as 1880. Nearly 90% of India's gold once came from the Kolar mines, about 93km east of Bengaluru.



Experience Heritage



Department of Tourism, Government of Karnataka

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Phone: 080-2235 2828, Mail: info@karnatakaturism.org,

Website: <http://www.karnatakaturism.org>

Photographs by AHTUSHI DESHPANDE



The opulent interiors of the Golden Chariot exude an other-worldly charm

The Golden Chariot

■ RANEE SAHANEY

The global acclaim continues to come in waves even as this luxury train passes the 10-year milestone. Come on board and you'll see why — ensconced in luxury on a magnificently furnished train, travelling along a fantastic journey that takes you to some of India's premier wilderness and beach areas, along with major UNESCO World Heritage Sites. So yes, Karnataka's ever-popular luxury train is very much on a roll, except when it's busy getting a soft makeover readying for the high season.

The 7N/8D journey originally took travellers from the Karnataka capital Bengaluru to Mysuru, Srirangapatna, Kabini, Shravanabelagola, Belur, Halebid, Hampi, Badami, Pattadakal, and then onwards to Goa, finally returning to Bengaluru. That's how the Golden Chariot route began.

Since then, the luxury train has added more enticing destinations to its itinerary, including some of the hottest tourist spots of neighbouring states Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Accessed from four international airports (Bengaluru, Chennai, Thiruvananthapuram, and Kochi), this super-luxury journey offers

several combinations that allow visits to the alluring beach town of Kovalam (in Kerala); the French heritage-filled tiny Union territory of Puducherry (Pondicherry); the temple towns of Thanjavur and Madurai (in Tamil Nadu); and even the gloriously green Alleppey backwaters (in Kerala).

Revelling in quiet luxury

At Yeswantpur Railway Station, we can't wait to enter the inviting portals of the maroon and golden train snaking down the length of the platform. Chandan garlands and cooling drinks with the traditional *tikka* see our auspicious entry into the coaches. It's the opulent hush of quiet luxury, which shuts out the cacophonous world of an Indian railway station, that greets me as I slip into my designated cabin. Those who travel a lot by train in India will revel in this opulence and quietude. Each of the coaches is named after a major ruling dynasty of Karnataka — Kadamba, Hoysala, Rashtrakuta, Ganga, Chalukya, Bahmani, Adilshahi, Sangama, Shathavahana, Yadukula, and Vijayanagara. I am in the Chalukya coach. The fully air-conditioned train is equipped with 11 residential coaches, two restaurants, a lounge bar, a spa, a mini-gym, and a business centre.

Our bags have been magically brought from our hotel in Bengaluru and deposited in our cabins, beautifully appointed and accoutered in soothing classic tones of peach and beige — it is really a hotel on wheels. You have your private attached bathroom with a shower, towels, and toiletries. I collapse on a sea of downy pillows, arranged on the inviting peachy eiderdown on the

spacious bed, soaking in the nuances of understated luxury. A plasma TV sits across from me and there's a cupboard to stow away essentials. The window separates me from the outside world with the elegant drape of palest peach.

A knock on the door and it's the young steward of our coach (each one has its own attendant, who's like a concierge-cum-mum) who will be taking care of all our needs on the journey. With a quick smile, he checks if everything is OK, and then goes about arranging a cup of fragrant tea outside in the sitting area, common to everyone in the coach.

At the cocktail hour, the well-stocked Madira Bar is lubricating parched throats

Fine dining and a room fit for royalty





The full-service dinner on the train has plenty of options from a varied menu

and helping loosen metaphorical collars. Our group, comprising a Zurich-based Pakistani finance man Nasir with his ebullient Tamil wife Sangeeta (minus their triplets!), a German couple who've travelled on some of India's top luxury trains, two well-known travel writers, a Bengaluru-based photographer and more, is swapping stories and bios.... The highs (mostly) and lows of the sightseeing schedule in Bengaluru, the awful traffic jams, the loss of a more urbane, verdant city.... Deeper into the cocktail hour, the conversation changes. It's Bollywood gossip and tomorrow's destination now.

Dinner is a lavish full-service affair with plenty of options from a varied

menu. I opt for the grilled fish—it's delicious. Arjun, the photographer, orders a *thali*. Some of the others quickly change their order, watching him tuck in with gusto. The interiors of Ruchi and Nalapa, the two restaurants, are inspired by Hoysala and Vijayanagara architecture, with furnishings in royal purples muted by pretty florals.

Lulled to sleep by the gentle chorus of the wheels of the Golden Chariot, in perfect sync with the gleaming tracks, we arrive in Mysuru at some point in the night. Mysuru, calm and collected, waits in the cool morning for the crowds. Cameras on alert, we snap pictures as we roll into the parking area by the

gates of the stunning Mysuru Palace. Passing through the overwhelming splendour of the rooms open to the public, it's hard to take it all in. Return trips are very much on the cards. Then we are off to the legendary Kabini River Lodge, set by the Kabini river. The drive through the lush countryside gives us time to slowly unspool our thoughts and images from the morning. Soon, we're bouncing over the rutted road that leads off towards the jungle lodges.

The low-slung red-roofed bungalows with their spacious and cool rooms are scattered in a thick pelt of verdure reaching out to the riverfront. The morning light on the river is exquisite, an impressionistic painting created especially for us by Nature.

The morning after in a boat on the river, spotting deer and wild boar on *terra firma* and darters and kingfishers on the river, are a mesh of vignettes to ponder over at a luxurious breakfast, before we head out for Srirangapatna, the famous bastion of Tipu Sultan.

Tipu's palace is embellished with a riot of delightful paintings, but his mausoleum walls ring with silence and solemnity. Twilight is a purple haze as we drift in the direction of the Vrindavan Gardens for drinks and dinner, before getting back to the Golden Chariot for the run to Hassan and Srirangapatna, anticipating the joy of climbing over 600 steps to touch the deity's massive feet!

I must return to Delhi, unfortunately, reluctantly, after getting back to Mysuru and the train. I can't make it to Hampi and Pattadakal as I had planned. But I urge you to do the full tour. It's fabulous, especially since the each new season offers attractive combinations. ■



→ THE INFORMATION

KSTDC's The Golden Chariot offers 2 circuits of South India Pride of South

Duration: 7 Nights/ 8 Days
Boarding: Bengaluru/ Goa
Itinerary: Bengaluru-Mysuru (Kabini, Srirangapatna)-Hassan (Shravanabelagola-Belur-Halebid)-Hospet (Hampi)-Badami (Badami, Pattadakal)-Goa-Bengaluru

Southern Splendour

Duration: 7 Nights/ 8 Days
Boarding: Bengaluru
Itinerary: Bengaluru-Chennai-Mammallapuram-Puducherry-Tiruchirappalli and Thanjavur-Madurai-Kovalam- Kanyakumari- Alleppey Backwaters-Kochi-Bengaluru

Tariff

For Indians the full package costs between ₹1.25 lakh and ₹1.50 lakh per head. Rates are updated at the start of the season. **TIP** You can also opt for a 4-night journey of your choice and pay accordingly.

Contact

The Golden Chariot
Tourism House
No. 8, Pappanna Lane
St. Mark's Road
Bengaluru
Tel: 080-43464346
W goldenchariot.org



Udupi restaurants such as MTR have a fascinating origin in the worship of Krishna

KARNATAKA CUISINE

■ ANURAG MALICK AND
PRIYA GANAPATHY

Geographically, Karnataka can be divided into distinct culinary zones. The Karavali or Canara coast from Mangalore to Karwar leans heavily towards fish and seafood, barring religious towns like Udupi and Gokarna. The swathe of Coorg-Malnad in the Western Ghats displays a fondness for pork, plantation spices, greens and rice consumed in various steamed avatars called *puttu* or *kadabu*. In South Karnataka, *ragi*

(finger millet) is the staple while North Karnataka is dominated by *jola* or *jowar* (sorghum). Being border areas, Northwest Karnataka bears a touch of Konkani and Maratha flavours while the Hyderabad-Karnataka region around Gulbarga-Bidar has culinary influences from Andhra like meat, spices and *gongura* (sorrel) leaves.

It's ironical or perhaps some quirk of fate that the capital of the bean-shaped state owes its origin to a humble meal of boiled beans! According to folklore, Bengaluru was founded in 12th

century by Hoysala King Veera Ballala II, who was separated on a hunt in the forest and an old lady fed him the local staple *benda kaal* (boiled beans). In gratitude, he named this village Benda-kaal-uru or 'Village of Boiled Beans', later on expanded by Kempegowda, a chieftain from Yelahanka.

Bengaluru is a microcosm of the state and indeed the best place to start your epicurean adventure. From Davangere benne dosa, Dharwad Peda to Maddur vada and Andhra messes, Maratha eateries, darshinis and military hotels to upscale bars and speciality restaurants, you'll find them all here. Try the local favourite *donne biryani* (served in a 'donne' or sal leaf container) and savour soft idlis, crisp dosas and crunchy vadas at some of the most iconic eateries like CTR, Vidyarathi Bhavan or Mavalli Tiffin Room (MTR).

Vadas and *bajjis* are a popular teatime snack across Karnataka —made from *menasinakayi* (green banana caper), *balekayi* (raw banana), *iruli* (onion), *alugadde* (potato) and *sabbaki* (pearl sago) to *medu vada* (doughnut shaped fritters), masala vada (Bengal gram patties) or *ambode*. Rice is consumed in most regions but is creatively interpreted in a range of dishes like *chitranna* (lemon rice), *puliyogare* (tomato rice), *vangibath* (brinjal rice) and *bisibelebath* (hot lentil rice dish).

South Karnataka

With *ragi* (finger millet) being the popular staple, the signature dish from South Karnataka is *ragi mudde* (steamed finger millet balls). Often paired with mutton *saaru* or *bas saaru*, it is a hearty agrarian meal popular across Mandya, Mysuru and Hassan. The curry is made of *toor dal*, green gram, beans, dill leaves, spinach and other greens; the liquid is strained and spiced while the extract is tempered into a *palya* (dry fry). The term *bas saaru* is derived from *basidu*, Kannada for 'straining'.

To most people, idli-vada are Udupi staples



Udupi Cuisine

Most people believe that 'Udupi' amounts to *idli-vada-sambar*. However, the Udupi of popular consciousness has little to do with a culinary tradition that dates back to the 13th century, when the saint-philosopher Madhvacharya established the Sri Krishna Temple in Udupi, a town on Karnataka's western coast. The sage devised a set of elegant rituals to worship the godchild Krishna. The devout believed that the baby Krishna would wander away unless he was enticed to stay by delicious foods. This belief resulted in the *naivedyam*, where delicacies—no fewer than 14 varieties—are offered to the deity daily. Gradually, the temple authorities also cultivated the tradition of feeding devotees.

The Brahmins in the temple and the *maths* that surround it had to learn not just the exacting rituals required to correctly worship the godchild, but also had to cook well enough to ensure that he hung about in Udupi. Religion and culinary tradition merged to produce food that is truly fit for the gods.

A bowl of *koosambri*



SHUTTERSTOCK

So entwined with the temple is the tradition of Udupi cooking that even the vegetables used are chosen according to a rigorous system laid down by priests. Onion and garlic are taboo, for instance. Within strict *satvik* boundaries, the chefs devised signature dishes that typify Udupi food. None are more scrumptious than the dishes fashioned around the *matti gulla*, a squat greenish brinjal that grows only in the hamlet of Matti.

Home food is light and cooling in the coastal heat. So a meal will consist of salads like the *koosambri*. Then the *thambli*, considered the ultimate coolant. Seasonal greens are fried with *ghee* and then ground with pepper, *jeera*, and coconut, thinned with buttermilk, and served with rice as the first course. Next comes the *sambar*. The meal is rounded off with Udupi *rasam*.

In keeping with coastal tradition, a variety of steamed foods form a part of Udupi cuisine. *Idli* batter is poured into cups of jackfruit leaves and steamed. Ripe jackfruit is ground to a thick batter with coconut and steamed in the leaves of the teak tree. A balanced, nutritious diet is central to the philosophy of Udupi cooking; for their protein content, lentils are a prominent feature. *Udhina gojju*, made from raw *urad dal* ground with white pumpkin is a typical delicacy.

Through the monsoon, the Udupi Brahmins make spicy *chutneys* that go well with boiled rice. Freshly ground with colocasia leaves, ridge gourd, or yam and spiced with tamarind, red chilli and salt, these are a fiery addition to bland monsoon fare. No wonder then this faintly mocking proverb is so popular in the coastal towns: "*Brahmana bhोजना priya* (the Brahmin loves his food too well)."

Kori-roti is a traditional dish of the Bunts or Tuluvas (Tulu-speaking community) with flavourful chicken curry served with crisp wafer-thin roti made from boiled rice.

In the past, *koli-katta* or cock fighting competitions were common and the losing rooster usually ended up becoming 'chicken pulimunchi', a curry named after its *puli* (sour)-*munchi* (spicy) flavour. Seafood is aplenty with iconic Bunt dishes like *kane* (ladyfish) masala fry, *bolanjir* (silverfish) rava fry and *anjil* (kingfish) tawa fry, topped with crunchy red masala fried in coconut oil. The fleshy and tangy *bimbli* fruit (*Averrhoa bilimbi*) is widely pickled and used as a souring agent especially for *boothai* (sardine) *sukka*. Eat at Coconut Grove or Narayana's near the jetty.

Gaud Saraswat Brahmin or GSB cuisine is dominated by *hing* or asafoetida. Despite being Brahmins, they follow a pescatarian diet as GSBs are believed to have migrated from Gaud (Bengal) to the Saraswati river system, where a severe famine led them to eat fish. Giri Manja's is the place to sample a GSB fish thali and assorted fish fries. The trading community of Bearys is known for rare delicacies like *kalathappa* (thick savoury pancake), *pinyanappa* (steamed egg dessert), *koli norchad* (stuffed fried chicken), biryani and *sheer korma* (vermicelli payasa).

Photographs by ANURAG MALLICK



Mary Bai cookig her signature dish

Further north, Kundapur is an epicurean hotspot where the Kundapur chicken and chicken ghee roast were birthed in the legendary Shetty Lunch Home. Continue up the coast to the old port town of Bhatkal, known for its biryanis, often paired with *sirke ka pyaaz* (onion in cashew vinegar) and *baingan ka khatta* (sour brinjal curry). Arabian sailors who came here for trade intermingled with local Jains and GSBs to form a new community called Nav-ayaths or 'the newly arrived'. Their dialect borrows heavily from Konkani, while local tastes blend seamlessly with Arabia. They make an exquisite *shaiyya jhinga biryani* with prawns and a pinch of delicate vermicelli.

Fish curry-rice forms the major staple all along the coast right up to Uttara Kannada, usually served with fish fry and a vegetable side dish like *tindli-moi* (ivy gourd with raw cashew). Located south of Goa, Karwar resonates with Konkani flavours and dishes like *sungta song* (thick prawn curry) and the farmer staple of *kulith upkari-saar* (horsegram stir fry and curry). *Kokum* (garcinia) and *teppal* (a Sichuan pepper relative) are widely used as souring agents in curries. Sol Kadi, a piquant blend of kokum, coconut milk and fresh ground masala is a digestive cooler popular all along the Konkan coast from Maharashtra, Goa to Karnataka. Try an assortment of seafood from *bandga uggi/mastani* (mackerel),

A tasty fish speciality



kalwa (oyster) *sukka* and *tisrya* (clam) *sukka* at Swetha Lunch Home or butter garlic prawns and *karle ambat* (crab masala) at Hotel Amrut.

Malnad

Running inland parallel to the coast, the hill tracts of Coorg (See *Kodava cuisine Page 32*) and Malnad in the Western Ghats are known for herbs, ferns and wild produce like bamboo, mushrooms and honey, besides an assortment of steamed fare. The Gowdas rustle up delicacies from *kallele* (bamboo shoot), *kesa* (colocasia) and churn out a plethora of *kadabus* (steamed dumplings) – be it the savoury *khara kadabu* (rice envelopes with spiced lentils) or sweet ones with coconut, pumpkin or cucumber. Traditional salads called *kismuri* are made from beetroot, carrot, *bale dindu* (banana stem) and *suvarnagadde* (yam).

Besides Jains and Lingayats, Malnad is also home to Haviyak Brahmins, who have a scientific approach to food and churn out delightful *gojjus* (curries), *hashis* (raita), chutneys and *tambulis* (medicinal coolers) to combat the cold climes. *Arshina tambuli*, made from fresh turmeric root and buttermilk, is a lightly spiced aperitif cooler. *Vonagiru nellikayi tambuli* made of dried *nellikayi* (amla or gooseberry) and fresh coconut, is packed with Vitamin C and increases the body's immunity. *Shunti* Bellada



A sumptuous spread of traditional lunch

Kashaya, made from shunti (ginger) and *bella* (jaggery) spiced with pepper, dry red chili, cumin, garlic and onion, fortifies against minor ailments.

North Karnataka

In the hardy plains of North Karnataka *jola* (jowar or sorghum) is the primary staple consumed as *jolada roti* (flatbread); some prefer it *kadak* (crisp). Meals customarily begin with *menthya pachadi* (fenugreek salad) and heirloom cucumbers. Methi leaves help cut cholesterol, control diabetes and act as roughage. The country cucumbers have less water content with tiny closely packed seeds that makes them crunchier. Also served along with the meal are assorted *puadis* (powders) packed with

protein that make great dietary additives – *agasi* (flax seed), *gural* or *ucchelu* (Niger seed) and *shenga* (groundnut) chutney.

Lingayats form a prominent community in North Karnataka and are vegetarians. The twin towns of Hubballi-Dharwad are dotted with Lingayat *khanavalis* (eateries) like Basaveshwara Khanavali and Basappa Khanavali that serve *jolada roti* with *yenne badnekayi* (brinjal curry), *jhunka* (steamed gram flour cubes) and *hesarakalu palya* (whole green gram curry), liberally sprinkled with *gural* or *uchhel pudu* that imparts characteristic taste. Buttermilk and *majjige saaru* (buttermilk curry) help combat the hot climate. Durgada Bail, Hubballi's legendary Khau Galli (Eat Street) fires up the evening

Kodava Cuisine

Driving around Coorg, it's easy to lose one's bearings. The district is essentially one big tree-shadowed coffee estate cut up by winding hill roads and the occasional small town market square with many pork shops and, always prominent among the vegetable displays, the bright green and yellow stripes of the rotund Mangalore *sautekaayi* (cucumber). The plantation bungalows are always tucked away at the end of long driveways. Arriving at these bungalows, the overwhelming feeling is one of seclusion. This cut-off-from-the-world feeling is what everyone comes to Coorg for. And as well-travelled and sociable as the Kodavas are, it is the rhythms of the seasons and the produce of the land that continue to define Kodava food.

The centrepiece of this cuisine is meat

Pandi curry (pork curry) is unique to



JYOTHY KARAT

and its underpinning is rice. The coffee plantations were a 19th-century British enterprise; before that it was rice that ruled the land. The paddy fields needed protection from wild boars, which were shot and eaten, resulting in that prince of Kodava dishes, *pandi* curry—succulent pork cubes coated in a tangy, smooth and very dark masala.

Pandi has come to represent the specialness of Kodava cuisine—not only because it is one of those rare South Indian pork dishes but also for its unique taste. Pandi is tantalising partly because the dry spices used in it are roasted before they are ground. The other vital factor is *kachampuli*, a local fruit that adds that crucial pungency to the meat. Another delicacy is tender bamboo shoot or *baimbale*.

As for paddy, even though the Kodavas do not grow very much of it any more, they continue to honour those rice-eating traditions of old—pouring thin chicken curry over the rice noodle-like *nool putt*, turning out delicious rice-and-coconut cakes called *pa-puttu*, and insisting that *pandi* curry only be eaten with *kadambuttu* (small, firm balls of steamed rice). Their rotis are *akki* (rice) *ottis*; their standard dessert *payasa* is broken rice cooked in coconut and jaggery; and Kodava snacks, such as *bado-kajaya* and *chikka-lunde*, are made of rice flour.

Were one to eat one's way down the Western Ghats, the continuities in the food would be hard to miss. Bamboo shoot is a part of Mangalorean food, too, as is *kadambuttu*, which the Mangaloreans call *pundi*. The *idiappam* of Kerala is the *nool putt* of Coorg and the *shavige* of Mangalore. Yet, unlike Mangaloreans and Malayalis, the Kodavas go easy with the coconut, while the location of Coorg makes seafood marginal to its cuisine. Most importantly, of course, only Coorg has got the *pandi*!

with stalls serving everything from *chaat*, *bhelpuri*, 'tomato' omelette and other snacks! L.E.A. (Lingayat Educational Association) Canteen is known for its terrific *thuppa avalakki* (beaten rice with ghee) and their signature Masala Toast!

The region has several native vegetables and dishes unique to the region. *Tingal avrekayi* is a local bean available only for a *tingalu* ('month' in Kannada) while *karchikai* (*Momordica cymbalaria*) is a tiny pod vegetable that must be consumed immediately after harvest, before it bursts open. Both are made into *palya* (stir fry). Also popular are items like *jowari dodda mensinkayi* (stuffed country capsicum) and *gulagayi yenaagai* (like a country cucumber).

Besides *jolada roti*, North Karnataka has typical staples like *dapati* (mixed flour masala roti). Wheat is used to make *kuchida kadabu* (wheat dumpling), *kudisida kadabu* (stuffed dumpling) and *uggi* chapattis, steamed on green cornhusk and served with spicy *kempu* (red) chili chutney and ghee! There's a tradition of pasta making as well where little dough beads are pressed on a comb for stripes and shaped into miniature shells or 'shankha'. The broken wheat *kheer soute bija huggi* resembles tiny *soute bija* (cucumber seeds) and is a must in all Lingayat marriages and functions!

Yet, all is not vegetarian up



Hubli Basaveshwar Khanavali Lingayat

north. Savajis or SSKs (Somavamsha Sahasrarjun *Kshatriyas*) claim descent from the mythic thousand-armed warrior Kartiveerya Arjun and migrated from Central India to Karnataka and Maharashtra. As *kshatriyas*, bold flavours of meat and spice dominate their rich cuisine. During the festival of Dussehra, they offer *edimi* (wheat-gram flour dumplings), *arithi* (wheat flour diyas) and *lalpani* (liquor) to their paramount deity Bhavani. Eateries such as Nakoda and Devika in Hubli and Savaji Hotel Milan and Kathare's in Dharwad serve *kaima unde* (keema ball), mutton chops, *khara boti*, *tale mamsa* (brain curry) and *karadu* (spicy) mutton.

Northwest Karnataka shares a

border with Maharashtra and the Maratha love for spice is apparent in the erstwhile British cantonment of Belagavi (Belgaum). Be it *rassa* (fiery curries) or *sukka* (spicy dry fry), red chili is essential and it's easy to see why locals love their sweets too! Belgaum is known for its *kunda* or caramelized milk khova sweet and *mandige* (Konkani crepe pancake). Mutton is the popular choice of meat, sourced from sheep farms in Haveri while chilis are procured from Karnataka's 'Chili town' Byadgi. The erstwhile Muslim principality of Savanur is legendary for Shivalal's 'khara' (mixture) since 1931. Just past

Korti Kolhar chicken curry meal



Almatty Dam, Korti-Kolhar on the Bijapur (Vijayapura) highway attracts travelers with fresh fish from the Krishna river and *matka* curd, served with *puttani-avalakki* (spicy Bengal gram powder and beaten rice). Vijayapura is legendary for its 'Bijapur oota', served in local eateries.

The Hyderabad-Karnataka region, bordering Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, has culinary influences of a meat heavy, spicy cuisine and the use of *gongura* (sorrel leaves). Locally known as *pundi palya*, its popular in Central and North Karnataka and often made into chutney or cooked with lentils or mutton. The addition of local Rayadurga brinjals to *mamsa* (mutton) *pundi palya* adds a typical flavour. Hyderabad-inspired dishes like dum biryani, Kalyani biryani, *dalcha* (meat with lentils) and *bread ka meetha* are common in Kalaburagi (earlier Gulbarga).

Believe it or not, Karnataka also boasts of great Punjabi cuisine! In 1512, Guru Nanak came to the Deccan during his second *udasi* (spiritual journey) and created a *jhira* or fresh water spring in Bidar that flows to this day. The langar (free kitchen) at Gurudwara Nanak Jhira feeds thousands of visitors daily while Rohit Restaurant nearby dishes out authentic *mah ki dal*, *makki di roti*, *sarson da saag* and Punjabi fare. Come, celebrate the diversity of Karnataka through its food...



Ballari Cycle khova

SWEETS OF KARNATAKA

To say that Karnataka loves its sweets would be an understatement. From soft Mysore Pak to granular Dharwad Pedas and fudge-like Belgaum *kunda* to crunchy Gokak *karadantu*, Karnataka is a delightful assortment of textures and flavours.

Ragi *unde* are laddu or sweet, lemon-sized balls made of finger millet flour, powdered sugar or jaggery, ghee, cashewnuts, raisins and cardamom. A teatime snack and dessert, it is widely consumed across South and Central Karnataka. Rave *unde*, a laddu made of semolina, is also popular. *Chiroti* or *peni* is a crisp flaky layered *puri* dusted with castor sugar. Bale Hannu Halwa is a

dessert from Karnataka's Karavali coast. Malnad has a wide range of sweet *kadabus* (steamed desserts) made from cucumber and pumpkin!

One of the most loved traditional sweets is Kai Kadabu, a steamed dumpling filled with grated coconut, jaggery and cardamom. Karchikai (or *gujiya* in North India) is a fried dumpling with a sweet filling, typically made during Deepavali, along with Kajjaya or Athirasa, another festive sweet. Holige is a traditional sweet flatbread ritually made on Ugadi, the Kannada New Year. Mangalore Catholics prepare *vorn*, a moong dal *payasa* made of split green gram, a must at weddings and the annual Monti Fest. Sheer Kurma, literally 'milk with dates'

in Persian, is a festive vermicelli pudding made on Eid-ul-Fitr.

Karnataka has a plethora of *payasas* (kheer). Lingayat cuisine is known for its *huggi payasa* made from cracked wheat and milk, a must at all marriages and functions. In Mangaluru's Beary Muslim cuisine, Elaneer or Bonda payasa is made of abundantly available *bonda* or *elaneer* (tender coconut). Here's a look at some of the most iconic and popular sweets of Karnataka.

Mysore Pak

Perhaps the most popular South Indian sweet, Mysore Pak is a melt-in-your-mouth fudge made of besan (chickpea flour), sugar

and copious quantities of ghee. Renowned for its sweetness and notorious for its unmatched richness, it comes in two variants—crumbly with pores or smooth and dense.

Dharwad Peda

Dharwad Peda's legacy goes back 175 years, when Ram Ratan Singh Thakur migrated to Dharwad from Unnao due to a plague and made *pedas*. However, it was popularised by his grandson Babu Singh Thakur. The long queues at the shop earned the area the name Line Bazaar! Unlike its flat cousins from the north, the Dharwad peda is round and grainy, with a veneer of castor sugar.

Belgaum Kunda

Belgaum *kunda* was created by accident thanks to cooks who had migrated from Marwar. Once Gajanan Mithaiwala, better known as Jakku Marwari, was boiling milk but forgot to switch off the stove. By the time he returned, the milk had coagulated to which he added *khoa* and created Belgaum *kunda*.

Belgaum Mandige

Besides the eponymous *kunda*, Belgaum (Belagavi) is known for another sweet—*mande* or *mandige*. A crepe with a thin filling of sugar, ghee and *khoa*, it is made on an upturned tava like a roomali but is folded like a dosa. It's a must in Brahmin



A plate of the melt-in-your-mouth Mysore Pak

weddings, displayed in large baskets, without being folded.

Amingad/Gokak Karadantu

Antinunde is a teatime snack made of jaggery, dry fruits, nuts and *antu* (edible gum). Since the ingredients were fried, it was also called 'karadi-antu' (fried gum) and eventually *karadantu*. In 1907, Savaligappa Aiholli of Amingad became the first *karadantu* maker. Because it was sold at Gokak, it became famous as 'Gokak' *karadantu*.

Bhatkal Halwa

The coastal town of Bhatkal is famous for its Godi Halwa, a glutinous sweet made of godi or wheat milk. Pick up a box from Hashim Bakery or the historic Bhatkal Sandow Halwa.

Gulbarga's Malpuri

While Kalaburagi (Gulbarga) is known for its paan mithai (shaped like a paan with a stuffing of *khoa*), it is synonymous with the malpuri. Not to be confused with malpua, this deep-fried sweet is stuffed with *khoa* and dunked in sugar syrup. The sweet was made famous by 'Mamu Jaan ki Malpuri', a tiny shop in Chappal Bazaar.

Ballari 'Cycle' Khova

Ballari (Bellary) is famous for its 'cycle' *khova*, sold on bicycles and dispensed from brass containers on eco-friendly sal leaf plates, which accentuates the taste! Buy from vendors who trawl the streets on bicycles or have a bite at Bombay Sweets and Abid Cycle Khova Store.

Dharwad Peda; Mandige at Krishnamurti





Karnataka's tableau at the Republic Day parade in Delhi shows a Bidriware artisan

CRAFTS OF KARNATAKA

Mysuru Paintings

The famous gold-leaf paintings of Mysuru trace their lineage back to the days of the Vijayanagara Empire. The fall of Vijayanagara in the 17th century sent shockwaves through the region, although many artists were rehabilitated by Raja Wodeyar of Mysuru. In the 18th century, under Krishna Raja Wodeyar III, Mysuru paintings emerged as a distinct school.

The use of fine gold leaf over thin layers of gesso paste, natural colours and dyes, and paper made

from pulp distinguish Mysuru paintings. Common themes are religious iconography and scenes from secular life.

Wood Carving

That the land of sandalwood and rosewood produces some of the most beautiful pieces of carved wooden furniture and artefacts shouldn't come as a surprise. On your travels around Karnataka, you'll spot fine examples of this old and famous craft everywhere you go. **Sandalwood**, with its religious significance and soft

wood, is preferred for *puja* articles and small, intricate designs—jewellery boxes, decorative pieces, card holders, souvenir elephants, etc. **Rosewood** and teak are what the connoisseurs recommend for long-lasting furniture. Rosewood is also used for carved items like wall panels and clocks, but the finest examples of rosewood craft are to be found as inlay work.

Bidriware

From the land of the Bahmani Sultans comes bidriware. Originally a metal craft from Persia, bidriware found its new home in Bidar, the capital of the Bahmani dynasty. Artisans here developed the art further, making it one of the most striking types of handicraft anywhere. An alloy of zinc and copper is used to cast Bidriware articles, and the black colour of the resulting object is then etched and fitted with inlays of silver and gold. Finally, after the application of a special paste, and a final washing, what emerges is a gleaming, black-and-silver, rather royal-looking object with intricate inlay work.

Mysuru silk

No mention of Karnataka's crafts would be complete without Mysuru's silk saris. Karnataka produces the bulk of India's raw silk, and when this meets traditional craftsman-ship, the end product is gorgeous. Mysuru silk saris, especially with gold *zari* borders, are the highlight.

Ilkal Sari

Originally manufactured in Ilkal, this traditional sari usually comes in dazzling shades of green with a signature red silk pallu (border) with intricate Kasuti embroidery. Ilkal saris represent the social nuances of this region.

Kinhal Toys

Kinhal has received only a fraction of attention its famous cousin (Channapatna) has received. These wooden toys painted with vegetable dyes, represent a folk art that originated from the small village of Kinhal.

Traditional Ilkal saris are a must-buy



PRASHANT PANJIAR

Toys of Gokak and Channapatna

Gokak, close to Belgaum, is known for its toys—wooden articles assembled with paste, all covered in a layer of gum, before being painted. Gokak’s artisans are particularly known for their lifelike reproductions of produce. **Channapatna**, also has a strong tradition of wood items.

Ganjifa Art

Derived from the elaborate images used to decorate playing cards, and originated in Persia, Ganjifa art came into its own at Mysuru thanks to the Wodeyar rulers. In Mysuru, Ganjifa cards took

inspiration from various Hindu epics, often using the game as a medium of storytelling.

Kasuti Embroidery

The Lambanis, a once-nomadic people, now settled around the Hubli-Dharwad region, are well-known for their colourful attire, traditional motifs, metal embellishments and vibrant natural hues which make their clothing incredibly striking.

Durries

The vibrant-hued Navalgund Durries or *jamkhanas* were initially made by weavers from Bijapur living on Jamkhan Gali. During the war between the Sultans of Bijapur and Vijayanagara, the Jamkhan weavers migrated to Navalgund in search of refuge and established looms for weaving durries.

Pottery

You can watch potters at work at Khanpur village in Belgaum district and Narayanpura village. Products include large sized jars and containers, idols of mythological deities, animal figurines, pots and roof tiles.

Metalware

Going by ancient tradition, Udupi is known for metal objects made for religious purposes. Nagamangala is an old bronze-casting hub while Mangalorean craftsmen create daily household articles from bell metal. ■

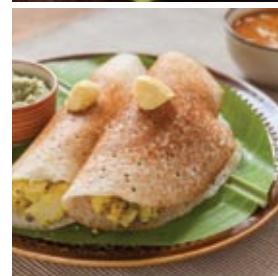
Colourful Channapatna Toys



Photographs: ANURAG MALLICK



Cuisine
of Karnataka



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SHUTTERSTOCK



Artists perform popular folk dances of Karnataka

DANCES OF KARNATAKA

Yakshagana

An operatic form of dance theatre, Yakshagana might be one of Karnataka's most famous cultural exports. Its genesis can be traced to the Bhakti movement of the 8th century, though Yakshagana's earliest clear forms may have originated in the 12th or 13th century. It was in the western parts of Karnataka, around the 18th and 19th centuries, that it really took hold, growing to draw inspiration from secular and religious life.

It also took on elements that make it impossible to pigeonhole Yakshagana, or its close cousins — Daddata from northern

Karnataka; Ghattadakore from Mysuru; and Mudalapaya from southern Karnataka — as a mere dance form. Typical performances start in the night, with singers and musicians providing a narrative as the elaborately costumed and made-up dancers create a mesmerising audiovisual experience.

Dollu Kunitha

This popular folk dance, closely associated with the worship of Sri Beeralingeswara, a form of Lord Shiva, originated in the rituals of the Kuruba Gowda community, from the northern hinterland of Karnataka.

Traditional drums, or *dolla* (to signify, according to legend, a drum Lord Shiva is said to have made from the skin of a demon) occupy centre stage in the music composition, with flutes and trumpets as accompaniment. The dancers, performing in a group, show off synchronised, acrobatic moves that demand great energy and dexterity.

Veeragase

Originally a religious dance form associated with the legend of Veerabhadra, the warrior created when Lord Shiva danced the *tandavam* after finding that his wife Sati, insulted by her father, had jumped into a sacrificial fire,

Veeragase has expanded to include folk variants as well. The religious form of the dance is still performed exclusively by male dancers, dressed up as warriors and adorned with *rudraksha* beads.

Mysuru Bharatanatyam

As with many other art forms, Bharatanatyam found patronage from the Mysuru Wodeyars — Krishna Raja Wodeyar III, Chamarajendra Wodeyar, and then, Krishna Raja Wodeyar IV, all of them helping Mysuru Bharatanatyam evolve into a distinct school in its own right, praised for its evocative *abhinaya*.

Mysuru Bharatanatyam's golden age came under danseuse and guru Jatti Thayamma and her successor, Padma Bhushan awardee K Venkatalakshamma. In recent years, though, Mysuru Bharatanatyam seems to have declined in popularity, although one hopes that with the youth once again displaying interest in traditional forms, this is just a temporary phase.

Nagamandala

Nagaradhane, a form of snake worship practised in the coastal regions of Karnataka, has given rise to the Nagamandala dance. This ritualistic style, performed by Vaidya community members, features dancing around an intricate *mandala* — said to

symbolise the energy and spirit of serpents — drawn on the floor.

Kamsale Nritya

From the southern parts of the state, primarily around Mysuru, comes Kamsale *nritya*, or Beesu Kamsale, a dance associated with the worship of Lord Mahadeshwara, a form of Shiva. Cymbal-like brass instruments called *kamsale* provide the accompaniment, as singers and small groups of dancers, trained from an early age, depict the legend of Mahadeshwara slaying the demon Shravanasura.

Folk Dances of Kodagu

The Kodavas have several distinct traditions and rituals, many of which are derived from

Beesu Kamsale depicts the slaying of a demon by Lord Mahadeshwara



Courtesy WIKIPEDIA

ANURAG MALLICK



Performers taking part in the Bhoota kola or guliga ceremony

their identity as warriors. **Bolukat**, a group performance by men holding fur and swords, is associated with the legend of Lord Vishnu and Bhasmasura. **Ummathat**, traditionally performed by unmarried women and a part of the worship of goddess Kaveri (Cauvery), depicts Lord Vishnu as Mohini distributing nectar. Then there's **Kombaat**, which used to be a strictly religious form, with men dancing in a martial style whilst holding deer horns. Other folk forms include **Kolaata**, featuring men and women wielding cymbals, and **Suggi Kunitha**, a group dance with performers holding swords.

Bhoota Nritya

Bhootaradhane is a form of spirit and family deity worship found in the coastal regions of Karnataka. The ceremony of **Bhoota Kola**, which goes on through the night, culminates in an energetic dance, with the performer invoking spirits and taking on the part of a medium.

Jaggahalige Kunita

A favoured celebration in some villages of Hubli-Dharwad during Ugadi, Jaggahalige Kunita uses the sound of the jaggahalige, a drum made by wrapping a bullock cart wheel in animal hide, to set the beat for the dancers, who march as part of a procession. ■



A Carnatic music concert being held at a temple during a cultural festival

Carnatic Music

The unmatched complexity of Carnatic music stands testament to its rich cultural underpinnings. This form of art could only have sprung from a society that valued the *guru-shishya parampara*, carrying forward the work of poets, composers, and artistes from the years gone by. Both energetic and soulful, Carnatic music is the sound of our ancient civilisation.

Genesis

It was around the 12th or 13th century that India's music traditions, regarded by purists as a divine gift from the heavens, began to evolve into two distinct schools, with a clean break

happening some time between the publication of the *Sangita Ratnakara* (mid-13th century) and the *Sangita Sara* (late-14th century).

In north India, the arrival of Persian and Islamic influences led, eventually, to what is now called Hindustani classical. But south of the Vindhya, it was the Vaishnava Bhakti traditions (such as the Haridasas) that held sway, and, under the patronage of kings and emperors, eventually evolved into the highly complex style of Carnatic music.

It was the Haridasa Purandaradasa, who lived in the late-15th and early-16th centuries in Hampi, whose efforts at formalising and delineating the

elements of Carnatic music resulted in it becoming a distinct music form in its own right. Referred to as the Father of Carnatic music, Purandaradasa is credited with having made scores of compositions; however, only a fraction of these have survived.

The system of 72 root *ragas*, the *Melakartas*, which form the foundations of Carnatic, is believed to have been first devised in the mid-17th century by the composer Venkatamakhi, of Mysuru, and later refined by Govindacharya. Then, in the second half of the 18th century, came along the three legendary composers referred to as the Carnatic Trinity — Thyagaraja, Syama Sastri, and Muthuswami Dikshitar.

With the arrival of the European empires came more changes that became an integral part of the Carnatic tradition — the introduction of the violin, and the increased usage of notation to record compositions. Eventually, by the time Independence arrived, the rapid urbanisation of India (ensuing in a growth in ticket-buying audiences), and the spread of radio formed a synergy that firmly established Carnatic music in the hearts of millions of Indians.

Maestros

The years around Independence are regarded as Carnatic music's heyday. Audiences then were privileged to see several maestros take to the stage: the Alathur Brothers, DK Pattammal, Sirkazhi Govindarajan, ML Vasanthakumari, Lalgudi Jayaraman, Tirumakudalu Chowdiah, MS Gopalakrishnan, Kunnakudi Vaidyanathan, Dwaram Venkataswamy Naidu, et al. Many of these legends have passed on, but

some, like Dr M Balamuralikrishna and TN Krishnan, are still going strong.

The brightest star in this firmament of luminous personalities was the singer who, in 1998, became the first musician to be awarded the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian honour — Madurai Shanmukhavadiyu Subbulakshmi (1916-2004). Also a recipient of the Ramon Magsaysay Award, MS Subbulakshmi wasn't just the leading light of the Carnatic tradition, but an icon who became a cultural ambassador for India. Her mellifluous voice, in a career spanning seven decades, graced New York's Carnegie Hall and London's Royal Albert Hall.

Over the years, new stars have emerged. Artistes such as TV Sankaranarayanan, TV Gopalakrishnan, and TN Seshagopalan are among these contemporary luminaries.

Sounds of the Future

Carnatic music has moved with the times, keeping its essence intact, while incorporating new elements. Many musicians have put their classical training to use in jazz, fusion, pop and rock. Lakshminarayana Subramaniam has recorded with the likes of violin great Yehudi Menuhin and jazz pianist Herbie Hancock, and performed with the New York Philharmonic. His brother, Lakshminarayana Shankar, famous for his work in fusion, can name John McLaughlin, Frank Zappa, and Lou Reed as collaborators. There are Nithyasree Mahadevan and Sudha Ragunathan, who've made their mark in fusion and cinema. Carnatic music lives on, flying the standard of tradition, welcoming new influences. ■



Photographs by ANURAG MALLICK



HERITAGE & ARCHITECTURE

■ ANURAG MALLICK AND
PRIYA GANAPATHY

Karnataka's architectural heritage is shaped by the various dynasties that have held sway over it. It is said that a 12-year-long famine and human misery caused monarch Chandragupta Maurya to abdicate the throne and embrace Jainism. Led by his spiritual teacher Bhadrabahu, the last *acharya* of the undivided Jain *sangha*, Maurya and 12,000 disciples left for South India led by their quest for inner peace.

On a lonely hillock at Shravanabelagola, following the example of his guru, Chandragupta lived like a hermit and gave up his life around 300BCE through the Jain austerity of *sallekhana* (fast unto death). The hill was called Chandrabetta or Chandragiri in his memory. By 3rd century BCE, the Mauryan Empire extended till Karnataka, ruled by Emperor Ashoka. **Rock edicts of Ashoka** in Prakrit have been discovered in Chitradurga and Raichur. Understandably, both Buddhism and Jainism thrived in Karnataka,

Art and temple architecture flourished in Karnataka under several dynasties

receiving much royal patronage.

In the 4th century, the local Satavahana dynasty rose and reigned for nearly three centuries. Its disintegration gave rise to the Kadambas of Banavasi (325-540CE) in North Karnataka and the Western Ganga dynasty of Kolar and Talakadu (350-550CE) in the south. These were the first kingdoms to give official status to the Kannada language, as evident in the Halmidi inscription of 450CE, attributed to the Kadamba king Kakusthavarma.

The rise of the imperial Chalukyas of Badami paved the way for a new architectural idiom

called the Vesara style. During this period, Chalukyan temples in Pattadakal, Aihole, Badami, and Gadag were conceived and Kannada literature evolved.

In 753CE, the Rashtrakutas of Manyakheta became the dominant power in the Deccan for nearly three centuries.

At the turn of the millennium, Nripa Kama established the Hoysala Empire. Art and architecture flourished, resulting in the construction of **temples** whose 'sculptural exuberance' can be seen in Belur and Halebid.

In the 14th century, to counter the Muslim expansion towards

the south, sage Vidyaranya Swami got the brothers Harihara and Bukka to establish the Vijayanagara Empire with Hampi as its capital. The Vijayanagara kings encouraged arts, religion, and literature in Sanskrit, Kannada, and Telugu, spawning great works. After the defeat of the Vijayanagara Empire in the 1565 Battle of Talikota and its resulting decline, the Bahmani sultans of Kalaburagi and the Adil Shahi sultans of Vijayapura ruled over the region. The Bahmani rulers encouraged Urdu and Persian literature and Islamic architecture, promoting a unique 'Dakkani' culture. Following the fragmentation of the Bahmani sultanate into five kingdoms, the region eventually came under the Mughal Empire.

The Wodeyars of Mysuru, former vassals of the Vijayanagara Empire, leased the state from the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb. With the death of Krishnaraja Wodeyar II, the Mysuru army's commander-in-chief Haider Ali assumed control over the region, until control passed to his son Tipu Sultan. To resist European expansion in South India, Tipu Sultan or 'The Tiger of Mysuru' fought four Anglo-Mysuru Wars, the last of which resulted in his death and the incorporation of Mysuru into the British Raj and the evolution of Bangalore as a British cantonment. Karnataka reveals layers of its fascinating history through monuments.

Go beyond Belur-Halebid, the twin gems of Hoysala stone architecture, to lesser known Hoysala sites; marvel at the musical pillars and the Stone Chariot at the UNESCO World Heritage site of Hampi; visit Badami-Aihole-Pattadakal, the trinity of cave temples and shrines described as the 'cradle of Indian architecture'; embark on a Jain trail to the massive Gomateshwara (Bahubali) statue at Shravanabelagola; explore the opulent palaces of the Wodeyars; listen to echos under the world's second largest unsupported dome, Gol Gumbaz at Vijayapura; discover relics of Muslim and Persian architecture in Bahmani bastions of Kalaburagi and Bidar; and stop at the historic Sikh shrine of Guru Nanak Jheera. ■

Sacred footprints at Chandragiri

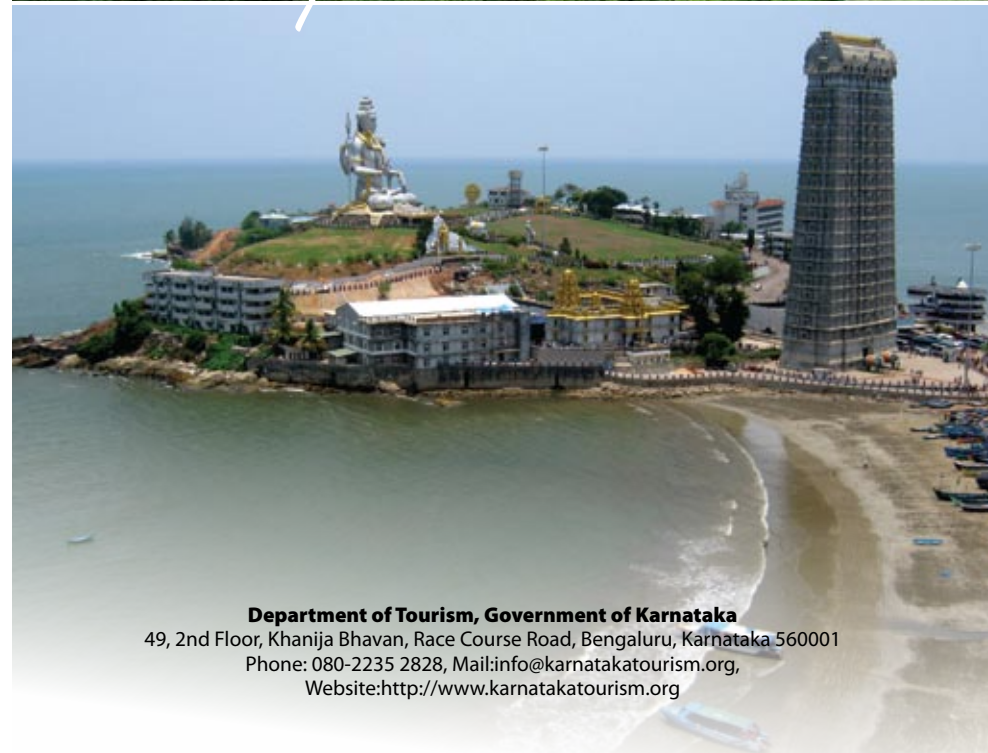


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The Pattadakal Dance Festival brings artistes from all over the world to Karnataka

THE BIG FESTIVALS

Ugadi

The Kannada new year of Ugadi is a time for renewal and anticipation, celebrated in late March or early April, usually with a gathering of close family members. Ritual baths, preparation of special dishes, and temple visits are part of the Ugadi tradition. Don't miss the ritual tasting of *bevu bella*, a sweet-sour-hot-bitter paste made from jaggery, neem, mango, tamarind, and chilli, which serves as an all-too-important reminder that life is usually a mix of experiences!

Hampi Festival

Any time is a good time to visit the World Heritage Site of Hampi, but there's no better time to be here than during the three-day Hampi Utsav (usually in November). The old monuments, already hauntingly gorgeous, look dazzling by night. Processions march through the area, evoking the royal grandeur of this one-time imperial capital, and there's music and dance at every corner. And while you're here, pick up some of Karnataka's famous handicrafts before

bidding adieu to Hampi.

But don't fret if you can't make it in time for the Hampi Utsav; in December, it's time for the **Phala Puja Festival**, the annual ritual betrothal of Pampa with Lord Shiva, and in March-April, Hampi wakes up to the sounds and sights of the **Virupaksha Car Festival**, a celebration of their marriage.

Hoysala Mahotsava

The Hoysala Dynasty has bequeathed an unbelievable amount of cultural wealth to modern-day Karnataka. So it's only fitting that the Hoysalas' remarkable contributions be celebrated with a festival at the stunning temples they left behind. In March, Belur and Halebid put up the Hoysala Mahotsava, with classical performances by renowned artistes taking place against the beautiful backdrop of these ancient temples.

Pattadakal Dance Festival

Karnataka is home to not one but two monuments significant enough to be World Heritage Sites. In February, the Chalukyan stronghold of Pattadakal, a site of exquisite, over-a-millennium-old temples, is the venue for the Pattadakal Dance Festival (also known as the **Chalukya Utsava**) with performers from all over the world congregating here. Badami and Aihole join in the exuberant festivities.

Huthri

The Kodagu region might be best known for its coffee plantations (apart from the serene environs), but the Kodavas haven't forgotten the place rice cultivation held in their society. And they continue to commemorate the harvest season with **Huthri**, or **Puttari Namme** ('new rice'; late-November to mid-December). There's ritual cutting of the crop and, of course, dance, music and frolic.

Vairamudi

One of the biggest events in the Mandya region is the **Vairamudi**

Folk performers at Hampi Festival



Photographs: GETTY IMAGES

Brahmotsava. Held at the Cheluvu Narayana Swamy Temple in Melukote (during March or April), the fortnight-long festivities culminate in a procession of Lord Cheluvu Narayana wearing his crown.

Tula Sankramana

Primarily a Kodagu tradition, Tula or Kaveri Sankramana is held in October, on the day the sun enters the Tula *rashi* (Libra). Devotees believe goddess Kaveri (Cauvery) gives *darshan* at Talacauvery on this auspicious day. Head for the small temple town in the Kodagu hills for a taste of the *theerthodbhava* ceremony, in which the Kaveri river's waters fill up a tank. And

don't forget to carry back some of that holy water. Another Kodagu festival that visitors might want to drop in for is **Kailpoldh** in August. This is when the Kodavas, warriors by tradition, take out their weapons for worship. Villages stage events and contests, and come nightfall, it's time for merry-making and celebration.

Makar Sankranti

A pan-India festival that's celebrated with as much gusto in Karnataka, the harvest festival of Makar Sankranti (January 14, when the sun enters Capricorn) is a time of prayers, ritual offerings at temples, and visiting friends and family. A dish prepared specially for Sankranti is *ellu bella*, a mixture of sesame, jaggery, coconut, gram, and peanuts. Head over to rural Karnataka or a temple, and you might witness the ritual feeding of cows.

Ellu bella, a special Makar Sankranti dish



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Mahamastakabhisheka

Shravanabelagola, in the Hassan district of South Karnataka, is an ancient Jain centre with a 17m high statue of Gomateshwara (Bahubali). The ritual anointing of Gomateshwara is a grand event that takes place once in 12 years. During the festival, all pilgrims may climb up a scaffolding raised for the purpose, for a rare top-down look at the statue; only Jains are allowed to perform *abhisheka*. The next Mahamastakabhisheka festival is due in 2030. ■

SAIBAL DAS



At the centre of the Mysuru royal crest is the mythical bird Ganda-Berunda

A Perfect Ten

Late September or early October is when Mysuru, Karnataka's most elegant city, truly comes into her own. Ten days of pomp and ceremony mark the festival of **Dasara**, a ritual remembrance of the triumph of good over evil. Elaborate *rangolis* (pictorial art using coloured powders) are drawn in the front yards. Evenings bear just that hint of the coming winter, suffused with the music wafting out of concerts held on the palace grounds and the many *gayana sabhas* that dot the city.

Streets fill up with hundreds of visitors trooping in to view Mysuru's many landmarks. There is none more imposing than the **Amba Vilas**

Palace, lit up in all its grandeur. It displays the **Golden Throne** featuring the embedded insignia of the **Ganda-Berunda**, the mythical double-headed bird that is the royal emblem of the Wodeyars.

Finally, on **Vijaya Dashami**, the 10th day, princely regalia is out in full force for the Dasara procession. Starting with a ceremonial prayer by the scion of the Wodeyar dynasty, it culminates when the idol of goddess Bhuvaneshwari, the patron deity of Karnataka, is taken around the city for several hours atop a caparisoned elephant.

Mass culture blends seamlessly with royal grandeur during these festivities, which comprise a veritable showcase of Kannada heritage.



SHUTTERSTOCK



WILDLIFE IN KARNATAKA

■ ANURAG MALICK AND
PRIYA GANAPATHY

Forests cover a fifth of Karnataka's geographical area, though only 3% landmass (roughly 6,600 sq km), is dedicated to wildlife. Yet, Karnataka supports the largest elephant population in India (nearly one-fourth), the highest concentration of gaur (over 8,000) and one of the largest remaining populations of the endangered tiger (one-fifth). In this state, you will find five

National Parks (Anshi, Bandipur, Bannerghatta, Kudremukh, and Nagarhole), 18 wildlife sanctuaries, and nearly a dozen bird sanctuaries. The Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, located at the junction of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala, encloses within its range the world-famous Nagarhole and Bandipur National Parks. **Nagarhole** (575 sq km), literally 'Serpent Stream' in Kannada, is named after a small river that meanders through the centre of the park, before joining the river Kabini.

The national parks of Karnataka are a delight for wildlife and nature lovers

The Kabini flows along the park's southern boundary and forms a reservoir further downstream to the south, forming a boundary with **Bandipur** (880 sq km), where the Deccan Plateau rises to meet the wrinkled folds of the Western Ghats.

Recognised as one of 18 global biodiversity hotspots, the Western Ghats harbour most of Karnataka's important protected areas. Two sub-clusters of the Western Ghats, **Talacauvery** and **Kudremukh** (600.32 sq km), are in UNESCO's tentative list of sites to be designated as World

Heritage Sites. Karnataka's wide-ranging habitat supports a rich diversity of animal species and over 400 species of birds.

Perhaps the first step towards organised wildlife in Karnataka started with the Maharajas of Mysuru. The wild tracts around Mysuru were littered with hunting lodges located deep in the jungle. Set against the backdrop of the misty Nilgiris, Bandipur was once the Maharajas' private hunting ground, as were Nagarhole, Karapura in the eastern fringe of Kabini sanctuary, and Biligiri Rangaswamy Hills.

These lodges and the wildlife preserves surrounding them became blueprints for modern-day national parks in Karnataka.

Maharaja Jayachamarajendra Wodeyar Bahadur became the first Chairman of the Indian Board for Wildlife. In 1892, he established the *Khaas bangla* at Mysuru, a 10-acre enclosure to house birds and animals, which evolved into **Sri Chamarajendra Zoological Gardens**. Till 1912, the Mysuru Zoo was under his personal administration.

The need for elephants for the Mysuru Dasara festival led British officer GP Sanderson to pioneer and perfect the *kheddah* system of capturing elephants.

Chameleons, tree frogs add to biodiversity



Photographs: SHUTTERSTOCK

Remains of these old *kheddahs* can still be seen at Mastigudi when the Kabini recedes.

After *kheddah* operations were ended and capturing wild elephants was disallowed, elephants were transferred in the early 1970s from the Maharaja's palace in Mysuru to Nagarhole. Jobs with the Forest Department were created for local tribes as mahouts or guards. **Dubare Reserve Forest** in Coorg (Kodagu), where elephants for the Dasara used to be trained, is now the site of an elephant interaction programme.

Perhaps the best place to start your wild adventure is **Bannerghatta National Park** (260.51 sq km), located 22km south of Bengaluru. It has a lion and tiger safari, a herbivore safari, a mini zoo, a reptile park, a museum, and a picnic corner. Be it K Gudi camp in BR Hills or the Kali Wilderness and Adventure Camp at **Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary** (475.02 sq km), each wildlife haunt and habitat is unique. Kavala Caves, at the heart of Dandeli Sanctuary, are quite tiny and have a separate entrance. You have to descend 375 steps and then crawl through a winding passage of 40ft to enjoy the stalagmite formations, in particular the venerated Shivling. Located in the dense forests of Dandeli, Syntheri Rock is a monolithic limestone structure towering over the forest floor to a height of 300ft. It is



ANURAG MALLICK

Elephants, once chased and captured, now have a thriving presence in the state

named after Englishwoman Ms Cinthera, who discovered it in the 20th century. A dense evergreen rainforest with rich biodiversity, the **Sharavathi Valley Wildlife Sanctuary** is a refuge of the endangered lion-tailed macaque, the great Indian hornbill and Indian lorries.

Biligiriranga Swamy Temple Wildlife Sanctuary (492.46 sq km) is at the junction of the Eastern and Western Ghats, and has flora of both regions.

In the Western Ghats, Coorg has several wildlife sanctuaries characterised by evergreen and semi-evergreen forests, as well as

the shola-grassland habitat in the upper regions—Talacauvery (105 sq km), named after the origin of the river Cauvery; Pushpagiri (102.59 sq km); and Brahmagiri (181.8 sq km), whose eastern tip touches the north-western edge of Nagarhole.

Another key hub is a huge swathe of green running along the coast from Baba Budan in Chikkamagaluru radiating towards Shimoga and Kudremukh. Gudavi and Mandagadde **bird sanctuaries** lie in Shimoga district, while Shettihalli (395.6 sq km) is adjacent to Shimoga town.

ALAMY IMAGES / INDIA PICTURE



The eco-tourism pioneer Kabini River Lodge; bath at Dubare Elephant Camp

Jungle Lodges and Resorts

■ AROSHI HANDU

The forests of Karnataka have a long and royal history. From the British to the Dukes of Russia, hunters from across the globe came to these forests; now, the jungles seduce the wildlife lover, the botany buffs, and photographers of every ilk. Spread across these stunning forested lands today is a string of lodges, under the umbrella of Jungle Lodges and Resorts, set up by the Karnataka government.

These lodges have been curated to be an intrinsic part of the experiential holidays in the state's many national parks and wildlife sanctuaries.

The inspiration came in 1978, when former Karnataka chief minister, the late Sri Gundu Rao, spent a thrilling

holiday at the world-famous Tiger Tops Jungle Lodges in Nepal. The magical aura of the Chitwan National Park with its plethora of wildlife — tigers, elephants, leopards, sloth bears, crocodiles, and a host of bird species — and his experience at Tiger Tops captured Rao's imagination. And so, he commissioned Tiger Tops to build a similar resort back home in Karnataka. Thus, in 1980, was born Jungle Lodges and Resorts (JLR). With great ideas come challenges, and JLR was no stranger to them. In 1987, Tiger Tops decided to withdraw its managerial operations and handed over the reins to the Karnataka government.

JLR was India's first foray into eco-tourism, serving as an eye-opener for people. This group of 16 resorts is

SRIKANTH KOLARI



amidst Karnataka's many sanctuaries and reserves is a hub of wildlife and adventure tourism, trekking, camping, fishing, whitewater rafting etc, which in turn aids environment conservation.

Whether you opt for a tent, room, or an independent cottage, the varied properties of JLR invoke a community-like feeling. Mealtimes are interesting as everyone gathers by the campfire, regaling each other with the exciting happenings of the day in the wild or even sharing personal anecdotes, nourishing their inner storyteller.

The serene beauty and location of the JLR properties will leave you spellbound as you head out on a morning safari or boat ride. The hot summer months bring the animals to the banks of the river Kabini, while during monsoons the forests are lush with greenery but the animal sightings are fewer in number.

JLR's **Kabini River Lodge** is

considered one of the top five wildlife lodges in the world — and with good reason. A sprawling colonial estate in the heart of elephant country, where tiger sightings are not uncommon, the Kabini River Lodge echoes with the call of the wild. This 54-acre property has its charms and traditions, which transform a tourist into an adventurer, hungry to explore.

Looking for a once-in-a-lifetime experience? JLR's **Dubare Elephant Camp** is just the ticket. Elephants, lots of them — and you'd get to meet them up close and personal here. This camp is where you can get to understand the Asiatic elephant a little better as trained naturalists take guests through the history, ecology, and biological aspects of these wondrous beasts. You get to 'interact' with the elephants by observing them closely and giving them a scrub-bath; you'd also learn about their food habits and how to take care of them. **River Tern Lodge**, on the other hand, opens up another unique experience altogether, as you discover how thousands of river terns use an island on the Bhadra waters as a nursery. The timing for the nesting period has to be perfect, with most of the fledglings well off the island by the time the monsoon waters drown the island; for the 'late latifs', their nests and fledglings are tragically lost in the swirling waters.

Nothing makes you more aware of how much we take for granted than a visit to the wild. Be prepared to leave these forested and riverine habitats as an environmental activist — the wildlife experience is known to touch the deepest recesses of one's mind. ■

Someshwara Sanctuary (88.4 sq km) lies to the northwest of Kudremukh, while the **Bhadra Wildlife Sanctuary** (492.46 sq km) was upgraded to a tiger reserve in 1998.

Karnataka also has **specialised wildlife preserves** set up for the protection of specific species. Adichunchangiri (0.88 sq km), in Mandya district is dedicated to the peacock. Ranibennur (119 sq km) was declared a sanctuary to protect the blackbuck.

Often known as India's cobra capital, Agumbe offers nature's bounty all year round. Fascinated by the reverence people showed towards snakes in the region, well-known herpetologist Romulus Whitaker set up the Agumbe Rainforest Research Station (ARRS) in 2005 which conducts research in areas like

rainforest ecology, behavioral ecology and cobra management.

Melukote Wildlife Sanctuary (45.82 sq km) was set up primarily for the protection of the wolf, while **Daroji Bear Sanctuary** near Hampi is the only sanctuary in North Karnataka set up to protect the sloth bear. Karnataka is home to around 2,500 leopards as of 2018. The majestic but elusive black panther can be spotted in Anshi-Dandeli Tiger Reserve or in Kabini.

With its lush greenery and favourable climate, Karnataka is a haven for domestic and migratory birds. It also offers sightings of 4 hornbill species.

During his survey of the birds of Mysuru, ornithologist Dr Salim Ali advocated the establishment of a sanctuary at the site of two islets along the Cauvery. The isolated islets and the abundance of aquatic insects made **Ranganathittu** a favourite abode for birds and it became a bird sanctuary in 1940.

Following this pattern, other bird sanctuaries were set up in similar habitats. Ghataprabha Bird Sanctuary in Belgaum is a stretch of 28km of the river Ghataprabha. Kokrebellur near Bengaluru and Gudavi are large waterbodies that have evolved into aquatic bird sanctuaries. For birding, November to March is a good time when migratory species can be found, while October to April is the best time to visit wildlife parks. ■

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ANURAG MALLICK

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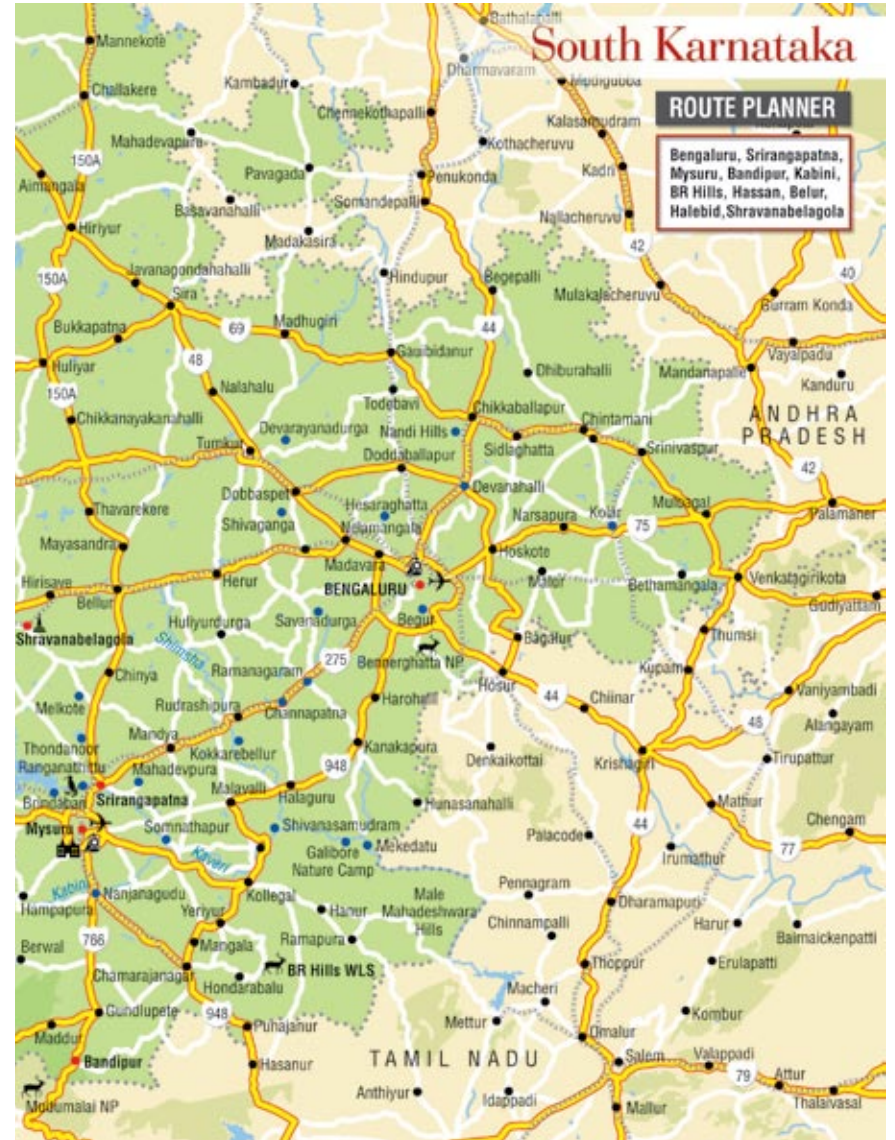
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Aerial view of Vidhana Soudha and High Court (foreground) buildings

BENGALURU

WHERE RELIGION MEETS SCIENCE

■ ANURAG MALICK AND
PRIYA GANAPATHY

Perhaps no other Indian city has as many epithets as Karnataka's capital Bengaluru — India's fifth largest and fastest growing metropolis has been called 'Pensioners' Paradise' for its easy retired life; 'Air-conditioned City' for its pleasant cool climate; 'Garden City' due to its parks and canopied lanes; 'Aerospace Capital' as ISRO,

HAL and ADA are all based here; 'Silicon Valley of India' after the software boom; India's original 'Pub City' and 'Microbrewery Capital'; and now also the 'Expat Capital', being home to about a tenth of India's expatriates.

Its folkloric origins speak of how Hoysala king Veera Ballala got separated from his hunting party. Tired and hungry, he encountered an old woman in the forest who fed him a dish of *benda kal* or 'boiled

beans.' Pleased, he settled a village at that spot and called it Benda-kaluru (Village of Boiled Beans).

Kempegowda, a feudatory of the Vijayanagara kings, formally founded the city in 1537 and shifted his capital from Yelahanka as this place had several large water bodies and natural defences of the Savanadurga range to the east and Nandi Hills to the north. Kempegowda built a town enclosed by a mud fort and named it Bengaluru, after his mother's village. He divided the walled city into *petes* to house people of various vocations. Kempegowda's son Kempegowda II, who succeeded him in 1585, marked the boundaries of his capital by

Karnataka
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→ FAST FACTS

When to go The city has great climate all year round. Catch local festivals like Bangalore Karaga at Dharmaraya Temple in March-April, Ramzan on Mosque Road, St. Mary's Feast in Shivajinagar on Sept 8 and Kadalekayi Parshe near Bull Temple in Nov-Dec.

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Photographs by ANURAG MALLICK

→ GETTING THERE

Air Kempegowda International Airport Bengaluru, Devanahalli (36km/1 hr; Toll-free tel: 1800 425 4425; KSTDC Counter cell: 08970650072;

W bengaluruairport.com) is well-connected to all major Indian airports and several in Asia and Europe. Pre-paid cabs (Karnataka City Taxi Tel: 080-41552222, 41553333; Mega Cabs Tel: 4747474) charge ₹800+toll to MG Road in the city centre. BMTC's Airport Shuttle Service (Vayu Vajra; Toll-free tel: 1800-425-1663), with air-conditioned Volvo buses services the airport-city route

Rail The three major stations, City Railway Station, Yeshwanthpur, and Cantonment, are connected to Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Hyderabad, and many other cities by daily trains

Road Bengaluru is connected by NH4 to Chennai, by NH7 to Hyderabad, by NH48 to Mangalore, and NH209 to Coimbatore. SH17 connects Bengaluru with Mysore, which is a 3-hr drive. KSTDC runs Karnataka Taxis (Tel: 080-44664466) across the state. State buses run from here and from Shantinagar Bus Stand (Cell: 07760990531) and Satellite Bus Stand (Cell: 07760990530) on the Bengaluru-Mysore Highway throughout Karnataka and to neighbouring states. Types of buses include luxury sleeper Volvos and deluxe Rajahamsa Executive. Tickets for private buses can be booked through Red Bus (**W** redbus.in)

letting four oxen walk in four cardinal directions; the place where they stopped, he erected four watchtowers (now well within the city). He beautified the town with lakes, temples, and irrigation tanks around residential areas. As the city prospered, neighbouring powers vied for control and in 1638, the Adil Shahis of Bijapur conquered Bengaluru and handed it to Shahji, Shivaji's father. In 1686, Mughal emperor Aurangzeb captured Bengaluru and, in 1689, the Mughal *subedar* of Sira province leased Bengaluru to Chikka Devaraja Wodeyar of Mysore, who strengthened the fort and built the Kote Venkataramana Swamy Temple. Under guidance of the Maharaja of Mysore, German botanist and landscapist Gustav Hermann Krumbiegel planted tecomas, tabebuias, cassias, jacarandas, and rain trees, each flowering sequentially through the seasons. Army commander Hyder Ali, who later became ruler, added to the tag of 'Garden City' by laying out a 140-acre park called 'Lal Bagh', named after its profusion of red roses.

The colonial era began in 1808, when the Mysore Maharaja leased land in present-day Ulsoor to the British who made Bengaluru (anglicised to Bangalore) a cantonment, moving their troops stationed at Srirangapatna. A large parade ground came up in the heart of town (today's MG Road) along with churches, barracks, bungalows, tree-lined avenues, and rambling parks. The famed 'pub culture' was



Interiors of Tipu Sultan's Summer Palace

born with British nightlife.

A century after the British made this their cantonment, Karnataka's new leaders chose from Greco-Roman, Indo-Saracenic and Dravidian styles for the new public buildings. Today, most of these heritage structures like Mayo Hall, Oriental Building, State Bank of India, BRV Theatre, The Bible Society stand alongside gleaming glass-and-chrome high-rises, giving the city its unique mix of old and new.

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

Tipu Sultan's Summer Palace and Fort

Originally a mud fort built by Kempegowda in 1537 and later reconstructed by Hyder Ali and his

son Tipu Sultan, the fort had a unique oval shape with eight doorways. Only parts of the fort wall and the Delhi Gate with its intricate Persian friezes remain, besides a Ganesha Temple in the quadrangle. Situated within the old fort walls, Tipu's Summer Palace stands in a well-maintained garden next to Ventakaramana Temple. Its construction began under Hyder Ali in 1781 and was completed by Tipu in 1791. Built out of teak in Indo-Islamic style, the two-storey wooden structure is similar to Daria Daulat Bagh at Srirangapatna.

◆ **Palace entry fee** Indians ₹25, Foreigners ₹300, Children below 15 free, **Video Camera** ₹25 **Timings** 8.30am-5.30pm

◆ **Fort Timings** 8am-5.30pm

Bangalore Palace

Modelled on the Windsor Castle and sporting Tudor architecture, Bangalore Palace is a gem that seems right out of a fairytale — with fortified towers, circular turrets and beautiful manicured gardens. Set in the spacious Palace Grounds that has witnessed many rock concerts, weddings, exhibitions and rallies, the palace is accessible from the rear Vasanth Nagar entrance. Pick up the excellent audio guide (voiceover in English by actor Roshan Seth) from the office as you navigate through the armoury, durbar hall, chambers and tiled hallways with photos of royalty and the *kheddah* (elephant capture by chasing them) operations, besides Mysore Ganjifa cards. In an inner courtyard is a royal bench

gifted to the Maharaja of Mysore by King Alfonso XIII of Spain, who stayed at Bangalore Palace during his exile in the 1930s.

◆ **Entry fee** Indians ₹240, Foreigners ₹480 **Camera** Cell phone ₹300, Still ₹710, Video ₹1,480

Lalbagh

Spread over 240 acres and inspired by the Mughal gardens of Sira, Lalbagh is home to India's largest collection of rare tropical and subtropical plants and trees from Europe, Afghanistan, and Persia. The neo-classical Glass House, modelled on London's Crystal Palace, is the centre of attraction. The brainchild of John Cameron, the superintendent of the gardens, this structure was built in 1888 to mark the visit of

Devotees visiting the Lalbagh Kempegowda Tower



Bangalore Palace is modelled on the Windsor Castle of Britain

Prince Albert Victor, heir to the Prince of Wales. Constructed with steel and glass manufactured in Glasgow, the Glass House once sheltered plants imported from Europe. Over the years it fell into a state of disrepair, until it was renovated in 2003, using laminated glass. It is the venue of the bi-annual flower show. Explore the park's other standouts: Band Stand, floral clock, one of the four watchtowers erected by Kempegowda, a 300-year-old silk cotton tree, rose garden, topiary, lake, bonsai garden, and Maharaja statue. Another historic feature is the rocky outcrop of peninsular gneiss, a national geological monument. It is among the oldest rocks on earth dating back to 3,000 million years!

◆ **Entry fee** ₹25 **Parking** Bike ₹20,

Car ₹50 (no vehicles can go inside)
Eco-Vehicle Ride Adult ₹100 (1 hr)
 Children below 12 free, above 12 ₹20
 (9am-6pm) **Tel:** 080-26571925

Bull Temple/Dodda Ganapati Temple

Lending its name to one of the oldest residential localities in Bengaluru is *basavana gudi*, literally 'Bull Temple', one of the city's top landmarks. Built during the reign of Kempegowda I, this monolithic idol of black stone is the site of the annual groundnut fair Kadalekayi Parshe in November-December. A few steps lead to the adjacent shrine of Dodda Ganesha, also known as 'Satya Ganapati' or 'Shakti Ganapati'. Kempegowda is believed to have chanced upon an etching of Ganesha on a rock near

Courtesy WIKIPEDIA



Bangalore Karaga

This ancient festival is an important feature of Bengaluru's religious calendar. The origin of the nine-day Karaga festival (March-April) goes back more than five centuries. It celebrates the chief deity of the Thigala community, goddess Draupadi, who is said to embody the ideal woman.

The festival, which involves all faiths, gets its name from the earthen pot from which the goddess is invoked. The *karaga* is made from the sediments of a saltwater pond at Sampangi Tank. It is installed in the Dharmaraya Swamy Temple near City Market, where it is sanctified and worshipped for the duration of the festival. On Chaitra Poonima (full moon day of Chaitra month), the last day of the festival, the *karaga* is carried in a procession that begins at midnight and continues till the morning. Carrying the *karaga* requires great skill, stamina, and concentration, and the bearer prepares through rigorous fasting and penance. Sword-carrying *veerakumaras* from the Thigala community accompany and escort the *karaga* carrier on his journey. They have the licence to kill: they may execute the *karaga* carrier if he stumbles and drops the pot! Fortunately,

the *karaga* carrier has never stumbled in the history of the festival.

The procession meanders through the city area, stopping to give blessings at the *veerakumaras'* homes and temples in the vicinity. The procession also halts at the dargah of Hazrat Tawakkal Mastan, the 18th century Muslim saint, a proof of the secular nature of this festival. Legend has it that on hearing the approach of the *karaga*, the saint ran towards it, but fell and was grievously injured. The Hindus applied *kumkum* to his wounds, which miraculously healed. Hazrat Mastan prayed to Draupadi that after his demise, the *karaga* stop at his tomb, a tradition that continues to this day. As dawn breaks, the procession returns to the temple, devotees splash turmeric water on each other and two chosen ones remain at the temple to drink a sacrificial lamb's blood. The *karaga* is returned to the saltwater pond and the bearer of the pot breaks his fast. The *karaga* carrier is said to assume the form of goddess Draupadi and dresses in feminine attire, wearing his wife's bangles and *mangalsutra*, while his wife takes on the role of a widow till her husband returns.

the Bull Temple, which his sculptors carved into an 18ft high sculpture.

◆ **Timings** 6am-12 noon,
5.30pm-8.30pm

Gavi Gangadhareshwara Temple

Located in the nook of a small hill called Harirayanagudda in Basavanagudi, the ancient cave temple dates back a thousand years and was expanded by the city's founder Kempegowda I. The tall *suryapana* or monolithic pillars bearing motifs of moon and sun, Shiva's trident, *damaru* (drum) and stone parasol (umbrella) were etched in his time. Dedicated to the celestial couple Shiva-Parvati, the deities are set inside a gavi (cave), hence the name. Mentioned in British

travelogues of 1792, this temple's unique feature is that on Makar Sankranti (January 14), the sunrays pass through a window and fall directly on the Shiva *linga*.

KR Market

The atmospheric Krishna Rajendra Market or City Market is one of the biggest flower markets in all of Asia. Originally a water tank and then an 18th century battlefield during the Anglo-Mysore Wars, the Krishna Rajendra Market was established in 1928 and named after the Maharaja of Mysore. Only two buildings from the British era remain today, while a modern building between them houses flowers and vegetables on the lower floor, dry goods on the next

The Gavi Gangadhareshwara Temple is often visited by devotees



floor, and machines, tools and accessories on the upper floor.

Cubbon Park

Spread over 300 acres in Bengaluru's central district opposite the Chinnaswamy Cricket Stadium lies the city's beloved lung space, Cubbon Park. Originally created in 1870 by Sir John Meade and named Meade's Park after the acting commissioner of Mysore, it was finally named in honour of the longest-serving commissioner, Lt Gen Sir Mark Cubbon. Integrating rocky outcrops with thickets of trees and bamboo, grassy expanses, flowerbeds and fountains, the park has multiple accesses. Traffic is closed at 5am-8am. Cubbon Park has several historical buildings, statues, and monuments,

A bust of M Visvesvaraya



including Queen Victoria's statue opposite MG Road, King Edward VII's statue near Minsk Square, and the Chamarajendra Wodeyar statue. Notable buildings here are **Attara Kacheri** (literally '18 offices'; once housing the offices of the secretariat, it is now occupied by the High Court) and **Seshadri Iyer Hall** or Central Library.

Government Museum

Located at the edge of Cubbon Park, this is the second oldest archaeological museum in South India. Established in 1865 on Museum Road by noted Orientalist and surgeon Edward Green Balfour, the museum shifted here to a larger space in 1877. The new building was in Palladian European Classical style with Corinthian columns, floral motifs, fluted pillars and arches decorated with heads of Greek gods. It was designed by Lt General Sir Richard Hiram Sankey, Chief Engineer of Mysore. The museum has galleries dedicated to Sculpture, Paintings and Antiquity with *vira kallu* (hero stones or memorials), inscriptions, coins, musical instruments and treasures like the 450 AD Halmidi inscription, the oldest example of the Kannada text; the Begur inscription that first mentions 'Bengaluru'; a model of Tipu's 18th century Srirangapatna fort; and some cannons. The entry ticket gives you access to the small Venkatappa Art Gallery which is located next door.

◆ **Entry fee** Adult ₹20, Child ₹10
Timings 10am-5pm, Tuesday-Sunday (Monday closed)



The brick-red Government Museum was established in 1865

Visvesvaraya Industrial & Technological Museum (VITM)

The museum was started in 1965 and named after noted civil engineer, Diwan of Mysore and Bharat Ratna M Visvesvaraya, whose black marble bust graces the ground floor in front of the Engine Hall. In the front garden are specimens of a portable steam engine, an indigenous HF-24 Marut aircraft, and an Archimedes Screw conceived by the Greek inventor. There are different galleries dedicated to How Things Work, Fun Science, Electro Technic, Space, Biotechnology, BEL, Science for Kids, and Dinosaur Alive, with shows like Science on a Sphere, Taramandal,

Science Show, 3D show, and Wright Brothers Flight Simulator.

◆ **Entry fee** ₹75 **Timings** 10am-6pm
Closed on festivals like Ganesh Chaturthi & Deepavali

Vidhana Soudha

Built in 1956, the legislative assembly of Karnataka, the Vidhana Soudha houses the offices of the state secretariat and is the largest of its kind in the country. Covering an area of 50,000 sq m, this stone building is a fusion of several architectural styles — Dravidian, Rajasthani, Chola, and Kannada. Fashioned out of locally quarried granite, the Vidhana Soudha is

Bangalore Darshini

BMTC runs sightseeing bus tours from Kempegowda Bus Station, Majestic. For just ₹400, enjoy a full-day city tour in an AC bus that starts at 8.30am and covers more than a dozen popular sights: ISKCON temple, Tipu's Summer Palace, Gavi Gangadhareshwara cave temple, Bull Temple, Lalbagh, etc. For 35 years, Deenadayalu has been with KSRTC and serves as an entertaining tour guide. He speaks many tongues and sings Veera Ballala's legend of 'boiled beans' in Kannada, Tamil and Telugu for passengers.

Tel: +91 9972464148, +91 7022030257

[W mybmtc.com](http://mybmtc.com)

Bangalore Heritage Walks

Explore the city on foot with Arun Pai's Bangalore Walks ([W bangalorewalks.com](http://bangalorewalks.com)), from Military Heritage Walk to Victorian Bangalore Walk and Cubbon Park Walk to Green Heritage Walk in Lalbagh. Bengaluru

Paintings within Tipu Sultan's Palace



PRASHANT PANJIAR

by Foot (Tel 080-41203095, 07019272365 [W bengalurubyfoot.com](http://bengalurubyfoot.com)) organises Food Walks, Bangalore 'Pete' walks, the Tipu Sultan tour or exploring the old quarters of Malleshwaram and Basavanagudi. INTACH (Tel: 080-42064839 [W intachbir.org](http://intachbir.org)) does 'Parichay' heritage walks once a month. There is a Fraser Town Food Walk by Unhurried ([W unhurried.in](http://unhurried.in)), Jaunty Roads (Cell: 09945694161) in the MG Road area, and Aliyeh Rizvi of Native Place does an old city walk during the annual karaga.

Wine & Craft Beer Tours

A fairly recent but growing phenomenon, wine and craft beer tours are a great way to discover the city's love for high spirits and appreciate the nuances of wine-tasting with visits to nearby vineyards and wineries. The Kadu Vinery Tour (Tel: 080-26602666, Cell: 09148551404; ₹400pp, transportation not included) is a good day trip to their vineyard in Ramnagara, 70km from Bengaluru city; the 1-hour tour around the winery is followed by 6 types of wine-tasting and an *a la carte* lunch (chargeable extra). There is Kinvah Wine Tours (Cell: 09379907300, 09620424002; ₹1,500pp with lunch in Yelahanka and a 3-hour tour around Nandi Valley Winery with wine-tasting, grapes stomping, lunch). If you love beer, take a Microbrewery Tour at Windmills Craftworks (₹1,000pp) to see how craft beer is made; also involves tasting of beer. Toit Brewery Tours (Cell: 09019713388; [W toit.in](http://toit.in); ₹850pp +taxes, includes beer samples, food pairing) are organised for groups of up to 20 on the first Saturday of the month, besides tours for private groups. Brew Tours at Geist (Cell: 09886442369) take place on one Saturday a month (price on request). **TIP** Kadu Vinery has grape-crushing on Sat/Sun at ₹500pp and 1 hr guided tour with wine-tasting.



The legislative assembly, Vidhana Soudha, is a fusion of architectural styles

decorated with frieze panels, ornamental motifs, floral carvings, and geometric designs. Renowned sculptor Shilpi Shamachar crowned the dome with India's lion emblem. A twin structure, the Vikasa Soudha, finished in 2005, stands alongside.

St Mark's Cathedral

Built for the British army, the construction of this church was started in 1808 and later additions were made in 1901. Following an unfortunate roof collapse and fire, the church was given a facelift in 1927. Today, the beautifully restored church is set in a picturesque garden. A High Renaissance structure, it has been modelled after St Paul's Cathedral and other 17th-century churches in England.

Chowdiah Memorial Hall

Dedicated to Karnataka's celebrated violinist T Chowdiah, the hall is a popular venue for cultural events. Built by architect SN Murthy, the structure is built in the shape of a violin. Rebuilt several times due to its complexity, opened in 1980, it is an exact replica, down to the strings, keys, bridge and even the bow!

Jumma Masjid

Located in Bengaluru's Cantonment area, the Jumma Masjid or 'Friday Mosque' is an elegant brick structure with gleaming granite pillars, intricate *jaali* work and ornate stucco floral motifs on its façade. Built in the early 19th century, entirely out of razed material from Tipu's Palace in Srirangapatna, the mosque was

damaged by cannon fire and renovated in 1836.

Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath

Established in 1960, KCP is the state's premier visual arts institution offering courses in painting, sculpture, graphic art, applied art, art history, traditional Mysore paintings and leather puppetry, besides master's degrees and doctoral studies. The Art Complex hosts regular hobby classes, workshops, demos, artist camps, dance performances, folk theatre, photography exhibitions, puppet shows and music recitals all year round. The museum has 13 permanent galleries on eminent artists like Nicholas Roerich and HH Kejriwal, and Folk Art, International Paintings, Mysore Traditional Gallery and Leather Puppets. The Art Mart and the annual Chitra Sante held on

Steps leading up to the campus



Courtesy WIKIPEDIA

the first Sunday in January are good platforms to buy various types of art from local artists.

◆ No. 1, Art Complex, Kumara Krupa Road Tel 080-2226 1816

■ karnatakachitrakalaparishath.com
Adults ₹10 (Children below 5 years have free entry)

ISKCON Temple

Perched atop a monolithic hillock in Rajajinagar, the grand temple complex of ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness) is spread over 7 acres. Constructed to commemorate the birth centenary of its founder Sri Prabhupada, the Sri Radha Krishna Temple is an unusual blend of Dravidian and modern temple architecture. Ornamental arches and illuminated cascades of water lead to the elaborate *rajagopuram*. The gold-plated *kalashas*, gold chandeliers shaped like inverted lotus flowers, intricate woodwork and beautiful paintings of Lord Krishna adorning the lofty ceiling are noteworthy. The high-tech temple complex has a Vedic museum, an open theatre for concerts, a massive 10,000 sq ft hall and landscaped gardens. Don't go without tasting the *prasad*, handed out by a temple functionary as you exit the temple.

Banashankari Temple

Located on Kanakapura Road, it was an ardent devotee, Somana Shetty, who brought the idol of Banashankari from Badami to Bengaluru and built the temple in 1915. In a unique departure from the norm, prayers are



The ISKCON temple in all its glory

offered during *rahu kala*, otherwise considered inauspicious by Hindus. The festive fervour is best captured during the birthday of Banashankari Devi on September 13; Dasara celebrations in October; and the temple's anniversary in December-January. The temple also lights up on Tuesdays, Fridays, and Sundays when devotees offer hundreds of lamps to the holy goddess.

◆ **Timings** 6am-12.30pm, 4.30pm-8.30pm

Kadu Malleswara Temple

The 350-year-old Kadu Malleswara Temple lends its name to the bustling neighbourhood of Malleswaram. Built around a *swayambhu* or self-manifest Shiva *linga*, it earned the prefix of *kadu* or 'jungle', as Bengaluru

was more wilderness than city at the time. Renovated in 1889, recent additions to its façade are idols of Ardhanareeshwara, Shiva-Parvati, and Ganesha, an Anjaneya temple, the Basavatheertha Kalyani, and the Narasimha temple.

◆ **Timings** 7am-12 noon, 6.30pm-9pm

Someshwara Temple

Built by Chola kings, this magnificent Shiva temple in Ulsoor displays a fusion of Chola, Hoysala, and Vijayanagara styles. The compound was constructed later by Kempegowda. The lofty *rajagopuram* (main temple tower) and the *dhwaja sthambha* (flag pole) are noteworthy while the main shrine has elaborately carved pillars and ancient inscriptions on the walls.

Some of the pillars resonate with musical notes when struck.

Shiva Temple

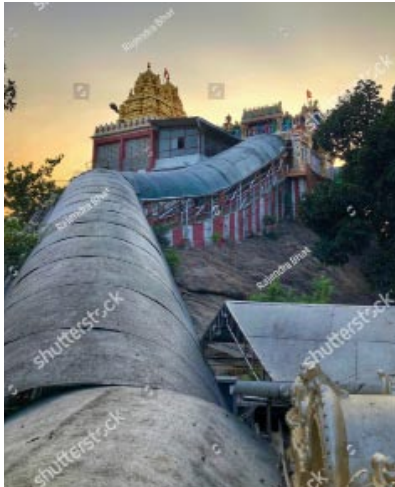
Located on Old Airport Road, the open-air shrine has a 65-ft statue of Lord Shiva in lotus pose with the river Ganga flowing out of his matted locks. Devotees toss coins in the wishing pool and undertake a simulated Amarnath yatra, around a cement cave with replicas of the 12 jyotirlingas. It is a popular spot on Shivaratri (Feb-Mar) when chants of 'Om Namah Shivaya' resound through the air.

◆ **Timings:** 10 am to 8 pm

Ragigudda Sri Prasanna Anjaneyaswamy Temple

The Hanuman temple in Jayanagar is believed to have miraculously originated from a big 'heap of finger millet' (*ragi gudda*) that became a

The hilltop temple was built in 1969



SHUTTERSTOCK

stone. Witnessing the incident, the divine trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva wished to establish themselves at the spot and transformed into three stone pillars that can still be found here. Spread over 5 acres, the hilltop temple was built in 1969. Hanuman Jayanti is celebrated in a grand manner over 12 days with pujas, abhishekas (anointment) and distribution of mahaprasad.

◆ 9th Block, Jayanagar

Tel 080-26580500, 26594255

W ragigudda.org

◆ **Timings** 8am-11:30 am, 5pm-8:30 pm, Mahamangalarti 11 am, 8 pm

Ulsoor Gurudwara

Opposite the picturesque Ulsoor Lake and its Kempegowda watchtower stands the main Sikh centre of worship in Bangalore. Built in 1946, it is a simple white structure with pristine marble floors. Special prayers are offered on Sunday, after which langar (free meal) is served to all. Guru Nanak's Birthday in Oct-Nov is celebrated on a large scale. The gurdwara also offers accommodation to tourists for a day.

◆ Sri Guru Singh Sabha

Opp Ulsoor Lake, Kensington Road
Tel 080-25553461

◆ **Timings** 4 am to 9:30 pm

St Mary's Basilica

Built as a small chapel in 1818 by Abbé Dubois, the church was transformed into a grand edifice in 1874 by Rev LF Kleiner. The Gothic architecture interiors of the church reveal stately arches vaulting towards the ceiling, rich Corinthian capitals

SHUTTERSTOCK



Interiors of St Mary's Basilica

of moulded bunches of grapes and artistic stained-glass windows from Paris. The patron saint of this legendary church is said to exercise miraculous powers. The annual St Mary's Feast is held across eight days in September and draws thousands of believers from different faiths, who come to pray dressed in customary orange.

◆ Shivajinagar, Opposite Russell Market

Tel 080-22865434

◆ **Timings** 5 am to 7:30 pm

Infant Jesus Shrine

Established in 1979 by Rev Dr Lourduswamy, then Archbishop of Bangalore, the church in Viveknagar sees huge crowds on Thursday, the day dedicated to Infant Jesus. The church draws devotees from all

religious faiths.

◆ Tel 080-2530 1206

Timings 5:30 am to 12 noon, 4 pm to 8.30 pm, Thu open till midnight

W infantjesusshrine.org.

Cultureama: Art, Craft, Music, Dance, and Theatre

For those who appreciate music and the arts, there are several venues hosting regular events and festivals. The city has several art galleries like the National Gallery of Modern Art, Peepletree Art Gallery, Venkatappa Art Gallery, Crimson Art Gallery, Gallery Sumukha, Sublime, and Rangoli Metro Art Centre. The Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath near the Golf Course is another pioneering institution promoting art with regular craft and textile exhibitions and the much-awaited annual event

Chitra Santhe showcasing local artists. Rock shows, jazz concerts, Carnatic and Hindustani classical recitals take place at various venues across the city. Hard Rock Café, The Humming Tree, The B-Flat Bar, Windmills Craftworks, Social, Bangalore Gayana Samaja, The Blue Room, Max Mueller Bhavan, Alliance Francaise de Bangalore, Chowdiah Memorial Hall, besides the Bangalore Palace Grounds, have been regular venues for music shows.

Regular productions by various different theatre groups and annual theatre festivals always keep the crowds milling in to spaces like Ranga Shankara, Jagriti Theatre, Chowdiah Memorial Hall, Ravindra Kalakshetra, Gubbi Veeranna Rangamandira, Atta Galatta JN Tata Auditorium, and Nrityagram.

Exhibit at Jawaharlal Nehru Planetarium



Courtesy MUSEUMS OF INDIA

HAL Heritage Centre and Aerospace Museum

It is quite natural that the country's first aerospace museum ought to be in India's 'Aerospace Capital.' Located on the premises of Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), the museum showcases the evolution of India's aviation industry and aerospace achievements over six decades through various aircraft models and a Wall of Fame photo gallery. There are flight simulator games, a mock air-traffic control tower and a small theatre with hourly audio-visual shows. A number of planes and choppers developed by HAL are lined up in hangars outside — from jet trainer Ajeet to Advanced Light Helicopter Dhruv and a mock up of Tejas, India's indigenous Light Combat Aircraft. There's a small cafeteria, an Aero Modelling Club for children above 12 years and a reference library with a collection of aviation books and magazines. A must-visit for aviation buffs!

◆ NHAL Airport, Varthur Road
Tel 080-2522 8341

W hal-india.com/heritage.asp

◆ **Timings** 9 am to 5 pm
Entry Adults ₹50, Children ₹30 **Still camera** ₹50, **Video Camera** ₹75
Flight Simulator Games Basic ₹50, **Motion** ₹100/head for 10 min

Jawaharlal Nehru Planetarium

Set up in 1989 and renovated in 2016, the biggest attraction of the planetarium is the sky dome that screens regular shows pertaining to the galaxy in Kannada and English. Catch 'Our Solar System' (12:30 pm



HAL museum is India's first aerospace museum

Eng) and 'Stars' (4:30 pm Eng) daily with 'Dawn of Space Age', an additional show only on Sundays (10:30 am Eng). Another highlight is a short news capsule on events concerning astronomy, like the launch of indigenous satellites. The planetarium houses a permanent exhibition on space and astronomy, and holds science exhibitions for school children.

◆ Chowdiah Road, High Grounds
Tel 080-2220 3234, 2226 6084

W taralaya.org

◆ **Timings** 10 am to 5:30 pm Holiday Monday & second Tuesday
Entry Adults ₹50, Children ₹30

Venkatappa Art Gallery

Built by the state government in memory of K Venkatappa who painted the Mysore Palace Durbar Hall, the art gallery houses the

famous painter's work and art materials. The exhibits include 20th century landscapes, plaster-of-Paris works and abstract wood sculptures, besides other renowned artists. Contemporary art shows are often held here where artists showcase their works.

◆ Kasturba Road

Tel 080-2286 4483/3737

◆ **Timings** 10 am to 5 pm Monday Holiday
Adults ₹20, Children below 10 years are charged ₹10

Indian Music Experience Centre

India's first Interactive Music Museum, it has 9 internationally designed exhibit galleries showcasing 108 musical instruments. The fascinating hands-on museum allows visitors to create their own music and has an interesting Sound Garden.

The Learning Centre imparts music classes from experts with regular workshops and free movie screenings.

◆ Brigade Millennium Avenue, Opp Wood Rose Club, JP Nagar 7th Phase
Tel 08040908054

W indianmusicexperience.org

◆ **Entry** Adult ₹250, Children 5-12 years/Senior Citizens ₹150

Timings: 10 am – 6 pm, Open on all public holidays, Monday closed

National Gallery of Modern Art

Inaugurated in 2009, the NGMA showcases modern and contemporary art by renowned Indian painters like Raja Ravi Varma, Jamini Roy, Amrita Shergil and Rabindranath Tagore. Nearly 500 exhibits are spread thematically in halls, rooms and corridors across two floors.

◆ NGMA, Manikyavelu Mansion,

The British brought pub culture here



Palace Road
Tel 080 22342338

W ngmaindia.gov.in

◆ **Entry** Indians ₹20, Foreigners ₹500, Students upto 18 years free

Timings: 11 am – 6.30 pm, Monday is closed

SHOPPING

Bengaluru has a slew of top malls like Orion, Garuda, Gopalan, Meenakshi, and Mantri Square Mall, besides high-end brands on offer at UB City. Buy a wide range of Karnataka handicrafts like statues, sandalwood carvings, inlay work and Bidriware from Cauvery Emporium on MG Road or Cottage Industries Emporium. For saris, head to Mysore Silk Udyog in Commercial Street. The Quad, a new F&B and shopping complex outside the international airport has some stores for last-minute buys and street shopping as well.

WHERE TO EAT

Bengaluru is a thriving gastronomic capital. From Nikkei cuisine at **IQI** to pan-Asian at **Fatty Bao** and Sriracha to Gowda cuisine at **Bengaluru Oota Company**, the Bengaluru palate is unbelievably eclectic and experimental. Award-winning **Oota Bangalore** above Windmills Craftworks in Whitefield brings authentic regional flavours from across Karnataka, paired with quirky local cocktails like 'Varathur Overflow'. Yet, the old traditional and iconic joints are still very popular. For a mix of Kerala, Anglo-



Luxury hotels are in abundant in Bengaluru, but budget accommodation is plentiful

Indian, Continental and local cuisine, try **Koshy's Parade Café** on St. Mark's Road, a colonial-era relic from 1952. For South Indian fare like *idli*, *dosas*, *vada* and *uppitu*, head to **CTR Shri Sagar** in Malleswaram or **Vidyarthi Bhavan** on Gandhi Bazaar Main Road. For Andhra meals on banana leaf and *biryani*, there's **Bheema's** on Church Street and **Nagarjuna Restaurant** on Residency Road or Indiranagar Double Road. For Kerala cuisine, there's **Coconut Grove** on Church Street, **Bekal** or **Thalassery** while for Chettinad cuisine, try **Annachi** and **Anjappar**. When you're in Bengaluru, don't miss the local *donne biryani*, typically served in *sal* leaf containers or 'donne'. Also check out the Dindigul legend **Thalapakatti biryani**, now open in Bengaluru on 100 Ft Road.

WHERE TO STAY

From budget to boutique and upscale luxury, Bengaluru offers a wide choice. A charming heritage hotel founded in 1887, **Taj West End** (Tel: 080-66605660; Tariff: 18,560-3,20,000 +breakfast) is set amidst leafy environs, opposite the Bangalore Turf Club, with 116 rooms, full service spa, pools and restaurants Masala Klub, Mynt, and Blue Ginger. **The Leela Palace** (Tel: 25211234 Tariff: 13,375-2,67,500 +breakfast) on Old Airport Road is a majestic modern palace hotel offering 357 rooms, dedicated butler and access to Royal Club Lounge for the suites. Occupying a green corner of MG Road, the city's prime shopping and entertainment quarter near Ulsoor Lake, **The Oberoi Bengaluru** (Tel:

25585858; Tariff: 12,500-1,25,000 +breakfast) has 160 rooms with efficient service, specially curated private dining, cultural experiences and relaxing spa treatment for guests. Overlooking the Bangalore Golf Course, **ITC Windsor** (Tel: 22269898; Tariff: 12,000-2,00,000 +breakfast) boasts grand architecture, period furniture, art and an unmistakable colonial air. Choose from 240 rooms, sip sundowners at Dublin the bar or indulge in a gastronomic journey at its award-winning restaurants. **Sheraton Grand Bangalore** (Tel: 42521000; 10,500-69,500 +breakfast) at Brigade Gateway near the World Trade Centre and Orion Mall, is at walking distance from ISKCON Temple. It has 230 rooms and a host of dining options.

Renaissance Bengaluru Race Course Hotel (Tel: 08046855555 Tariff: 8950) is a classy hotel by

A tastefully decorated restaurant



Marriott overlooking the Turf Club with spiffy rooms and suites, cool restaurants, a café and chic equestrian themed bar. City specialists called Navigators offer guests exclusive local experiences across the city. In Whitefield, the **Bengaluru Marriott Hotel** (Tel: 49435000; Tariff: 8,700-18,000 +breakfast) offers luxe amenities and facilities in its 391 plush rooms, ideal for business and leisure travellers. **St Mark's Hotel** (Cell: 08040019000; Tariff: 7,495 + breakfast) is a 4-star hotel in the heart of Bangalore with around 96 rooms, a restaurant, bar, and a rooftop event space.

The Park Bangalore (Cell: 08025594666; Tariff: 6,000-11,000 +breakfast) is one of the earliest modern luxury boutique hotels here and has 109 rooms, gym and Aura spa and the award-winning Italia for Italian fare. **The Elanza Hotel** (Tel: 66604545; Tariff: 5,500-6,600) is on Richmond Road and offers 43 rooms with breakfast. **Goldfinch Hotel** (Tel 080-41291300, 8904036489 Tariff: 4500) just off Race Course Road is the flagship hotel of a boutique chain with over 50 rooms and a few popular restaurants Banjara, Kabab Studio and Sanadige, legendary for seafood and coastal fare. **The Capitol** (Tel: 2228123; Tariff: 4,000-12,000) on Raj Bhavan Road has over 140 rooms, a restaurant, bar and pool and other services. There are budget hotels in the Majestic area around the main bus and railway stations.

For more, see Accommodation Listings on page 431-432

ANKUR BHALLA



A big cat beats the heat in a rock pool at the Bannerghatta National Park

AROUNDS

Begur (13km)

Once an important town under the Gangas and the Cholas, Begur is a Bengaluru suburb off the Hosur highway near Electronic City. Begur is significant because it has a 1,100-year-old inscription, the oldest existing reference to a place called 'Bengaluru', referring to a war. Besides a thousand-year-old circular fort (only the gateway and portions of walls remain) and a lake, Begur has the stunning temple complex of Panchaligeshwara with the Nageshwar, Kamateshwar, Nagareshwara, Choleshwar, and Kameshwar Swamy shrines located in the town centre.

◆**Timings** 7am-12 noon, 4.30-7pm

Bannerghatta National Park (22km)

Spread over 104 sq km, the park is home to several endangered species. Bannerghatta Biological Park, a small area in the northern part of the National Park, houses a 7.5-acre butterfly park, reptile park, aviary and zoo where visitors can get close to animals like elephants, leopards, primates, hippopotamus, zebras, wild boar, sloth bears, reptiles and birds. There are two rescue centres for lions and tigers, a small play area for children, a café and an area where elephant rides are organised. You require permission to venture into the National Park, unless you're staying at JLR's Bannerghatta Nature Camp located within the herbivore section. Overnight visitors can

explore several trekking trails like the 1.5 km hike to Mirza Hill or the 3.5 km trail to Uddigebande.

♦ **Safaris** Jeep safari ₹3,500-3,500 (zoo+safari+butterfly park+camera; AC bus safari Adult ₹500, Child ₹300; Non-AC bus safari (zoo+safari) Adult ₹280, Child ₹140, Foreigners ₹400 **Timings** 9.30am-5pm, Safari 10am-4.30pm (Tue closed) **Camera** Still ₹25, Video ₹200 **Boating** ₹60 pp (30 mins) **Timings** 10am-4.30pm **Contact** Tel: 080-29776466; www.bannerghattabiologicalpark.org

Hesaraghatta (25km)

Famed for the tranquil 1,600-acre lake and manmade reservoir, Hesaraghatta is also one of the few surviving grassland ecosystems around Bengaluru, supporting several species of wintering migrant birds. Originally created by Emperor Achyutha Raya of the Vijayanagara

Entrance to the Channapatna Temple



Empire, it was enlarged by the Dewan of Mysore, Seshadri Iyer, thus allowing Bengaluru access to tap water — back then, the water was brown and used to be jocularly called ‘Seshadri coffee’. While in Hesaraghatta, visit Nrityagram, the famous dance village set up by the late Odissi danseuse Protima Bedi.

Big Banyan Tree (27km)

Nestling next to the sleepy little village of Ramohalli is one of nature’s marvellous wonders. The *dodda alada mara* (literally ‘big banyan tree’ in Kannada) is believed to be nearly 400 years old and its branches and roots are spread across 3-4 acres.

Devanahalli (35km)

Originally called Devanadoddi, Devanahalli, the site of Bengaluru’s international airport, is also famous as the birthplace of Tipu Sultan. The original mud fort was built in 1501 by local chieftain Malla Byre Gowda of Avathi, reconstructed in stone in late 18th century by Hyder Ali. Inside the fort are houses of Tipu Sultan, Hyder Ali, and Dewan Purnaiah, a high-ranking official. About 150m southwest of the fort, in an orchard called Khas Bagh, is a memorial marking Tipu’s birth in 1751.

Ramanagram (47km)

Dotted by dramatic rocky hills and mountains, Ramanagaram served as the backdrop for the Bollywood blockbuster *Sholay*. The pivotal point is Ramadevarabetta, a hillock outside the town, with about 350 steps leading to a Ram shrine and temple

PRASHANT PANJIAR



A class in progress at the Nrityagram dance gurukul at Hesaraghatta

tank. Ever since the movie was shot, the hillock became known as Sholay Gudda. Ramadevarabetta can be reached via a turnoff just before Ramanagaram town.

Janapada Loka (52km)

Right next to Kamat Lokaruchi, the dramatic folk motif on the gate in brass relief, flanked by instruments announces Janapada Loka, a 15-acre complex set up by late bureaucrat and folklorist HL Nage Gowda, who also donated his vast personal collection of folk artefacts. The museum has a stunning collection, including a variety of agricultural, hunting and fishing implements, weapons, household gadgets, traditional masks, dolls and shadow puppets. By far the most impressive exhibit is an exquisitely carved temple chariot.

Channapatna (61km)

Channapatna is synonymous with its trademark lacquerware toys that have given this place international recognition and acclaim. The industry came up during the rule of Tipu Sultan, who encouraged this craft. Kanva Dam, 13km from Channapatna, offers a stunning view of the local scenery, and is a favourite with birdwatchers.

Shivaganga (58km)

As one drives along the Bengaluru-Tumkur Road, the Shivaganga hill rises nearly 1,400m above the plains. When viewed from a distance, the outline of the hill resembles the figure of Nandi on the east, Ganesha from the west, a cobra from the north, and a Shiva *linga* from the south. This is a well-known pilgrimage centre. Nearly 300 rough-

PRASHANT PANJIAR



Windy climes at Nandi Hills, which has the famous Yoga Nandishwara Temple

hewn stone steps lead to the summit, with small temples on the way.

Savanadurga (60km)

A massive rocky hill jutting out of thick forests, Savanadurga towers 1,207m with a circumference of 14km at the base. The ruined hill fort was the seat of the Magadi rulers and later Tipu Sultan's retreat. The earliest record of Savanadurga is from 1340CE by Hoysala ruler Ballala III, when it was called Savandi. Though the summit seems contiguous, it consists of two peaks: Karigudda (black peak) and Biligudda (white peak). Although there are no steps to climb, the local authorities have devised a clever route, marked with white arrows. Despite this, the climb is still considered treacherous.

Nandi Hills (61km)

Rising dramatically and terrifyingly steep in places, Nandi Hills is both magical and awe-inspiring. Perched

at 1,500m, it is quite cold even during peak summer months and chilly in the winter months. The invigorating weather, coupled with numerous trails, makes the place popular with hikers, bikers and others. Tipu Sultan is believed to have visited this cool and peaceful retreat often between battles and strengthened the fort from these hills. Nandi Hills has a number of popular attractions like Tipu's Drop, a 600m cliff where, according to legend, Tipu Sultan ordered condemned prisoners to be flung off the precipice. Ironically, it is also the best vantage point one can be at to marvel at glorious sunsets on clear days. The famous Yoga Nandishwara Temple, which gives the hills their name, is believed to have been built by the Cholas a long time ago. ♦ **Entry fee ₹20 Timings 6am-6pm Parking Car ₹150, Bike ₹30 Nandi Hills Tel: 09448636496 (Special Officer)**

Kolar (65km)

The first capital of the Ganga dynasty, Kolar has a rich history. Until not too long ago, almost all the gold in India came from here. Its mines, located at an astonishing 10,000ft, were the deepest active mines in the world. The town's main attraction is its temples. The presiding deity of Kolar is the eight-armed goddess Durga, worshipped as Kolaramma. Such is the goddess's power that her idol is not placed in the direct gaze of the devotee but in a corner of the sanctum; visitors are allowed a glimpse of her reflection in a mirror. The pit near the sub-shrine is believed to be the habitat of scorpions. Overlooking this pit is the image of Kapala Bhairavi, the goddess of scorpions. It is said that, every year on the fifth lunar day of the fortnight of Vishaka, a scorpion emerges from the pit and stays near the deity before disappearing.

Kokkarebellur (87km)

A nondescript village with no source of fish for the birds to nest and mate, Kokkarebellur has been the chosen haunt for spot-billed pelicans and painted storks for years. The winged visitors (*kokkare* means 'stork') come from as far as Europe, Siberia, and Australia and stay for 7-8 months a year, with The villagers treat the

birds as 'daughters of the village'. With the help of the NGO Mysore Amateur Naturalists, a pen has been constructed to care for fledglings falling from their nests. In turn, the bird droppings are a rich source of fertiliser for the villagers. When visiting, don't approach the birds, or try to attract their attention.

Galibore Nature Camp (100km)

At Galibore near Sangam, stay in tented cottages, have your meals at the Gol Ghar, and experience nature at its best. Visit Bheemeshwari Adventure and Nature Camp at Muthathi 14km away for a day of adventure. There's no overnight stay here, but the ₹2,950pp rate includes forest entry charges, lunch and evening tea/coffee.

♦ **Contact Tel: 080-40554055, Cell: 09449599768/ 09449597885, e-mail: info@jungleregencies.com**

Mekedatu (110km)

Literally 'goat's leap', Mekedatu is a scenic spot where the Kaveri river gushes through a deep and narrow gorge that's barely 10m at its widest point. The name is derived from an incident where a local villager saw a goat leap across the gorge to escape a tiger. The rocks are slippery and it's unsafe to swim — many have not been as fortunate as the goat! ■

#Awesom Karnataka





Photographs by PRASHANT PANJIAR

Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple

SRIRANGAPATNA

THE BECKONING ISLE

■ NANDINI SRINIVASAN

Many tales of valour and glory are tucked into the folds of the unassuming island town of Srirangapatna, former capital of Mysuru. Maybe it's due to the guile of the beautiful Cauvery river that you tend to lap up every anecdote the guide narrates. You tend to believe that the legendary sword of Tipu Sultan, housed within the State Treasury, is sacred and no one dare touch it.

If stones could speak, probably every tiny pebble on the banks of the Cauvery would make the English go red with reminiscences of Tipu's victories over the 'Unconquerable

Empire'. The lanes between the turfed outline of the Srirangapatna Fort bear touching memorials to the life of this unique king.

But if you're not too keen on going 'historical' on a weekend and need other diversions, Srirangapatna won't let you down. The drive itself, past the golden rocks on which the blockbuster Hindi film *Sholay* was shot several decades ago and through the paddy fields of Mandya, is rewarding in itself.

It's not too difficult to find your way around Srirangapatna. Cross the river to enter the town, then turn right for the abode of Lord Ranganathaswamy and the legend of Tipu Sultan.

Turn left to commune with a beautiful river, whose melodious movement you will carry in your heart for a long time to come.

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

Srirangapatna is set within and around the ruins of Tipu Sultan's fort, which encompasses most of what lies on the north bank. The fort, built during the Vijayanagara era, strengthened by the Wodeyars and then taken over by general Hyder Ali and his son Tipu, is considered to be the second-strongest in India. It cannot be viewed as a single entity; rather your interaction with it is a constant as you roam between the sights, passing through its Bengaluru, Mysuru, Delhi, Water, and Elephant gates. Every so often, its walls will rear up in picturesque locales perfect for a photo-op, like near the aged Wellesley Bridge.

Jama Masjid

As you enter the town, the minarets of the mosque beckon you. This simple, graceful structure was built in 1787 by Tipu. The prayer hall has a row of cusped arches and a ceiling carved with grapevine designs.

Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple

The presiding deity of the holy isle of Srirangapatna elicits a very different response from his devotees. There's something about the expression on Sri Ranganathaswamy's face that's very human. A long walk through his dark, many-pillared temple leads you past his divine peers and to his

abode. Within, lies the lord on the back of a snake, dark as the night sky with a benevolent smile. A visit to his temple makes a refreshing change from the usual sobriety of prayer.

The **Lakha Dweepotsava**, when one lakh lamps are lit during Makar



Wellesley Bridge over the Cauvery River

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→ FAST FACTS

When to go Srirangapatna is pleasant all through the year, but November to April is the coolest season

Tourist Offices

● Office of the Deputy Director 📍

Department of Tourism
PES Engineering College Road
Mandya

Tel: 08232-238377 (DD Office)

Cell: 09481155975 (DTC)

STD code 08232

● KSTDC Information Office 📍

Hotel Mayura Riverview Srirangapatna
Mysuru Road

Mandya

Cell: 08970650004

Sakranti on January 14/15, is a sight to behold. Outside the temple, an ancient chariot awaits your inspection, as do a dozen stalls selling kitschy keepsakes. Pick up sets of Tipu Sultan postcards: Tipu beheading Britishers, Tipu killing a tiger with his bare hands, etc.

◆ **Timings** 7am-1.30pm, 4pm-8.30pm
Puja timings 7.30am-9.30am, 6pm-6.45pm

Captain Bailey's Dungeon

A little further up the temple towards the right is the place the British dreaded the most. On an elevated platform near the fort wall are the dungeons where Tipu's prisoners of war were jailed. In the underground prison you can see hooks on the walls to which the prisoners hands were chained. In the midst of the chamber, there lies a well-preserved, ancient cannon.

View of the Gumbaz, tomb of Tipu Sultan



The Obelisk

About 200m down from the dungeon is a monument that marks the place where Tipu Sultan died, while trying to prevent a British soldier from pulling out his legendary sword from its scabbard. It is said his body lay there for two days before the locals noticed and recognised it. A commemorative obelisk, housed within a small enclosure into which you may not enter, marks the very spot where Tipu fell dead. You may take a photo through the railings.

Dariya Daulat Bagh

This wooden palace built by Tipu in 1784, set amidst manicured lawns, looks modest from the outside, and for the most part is hidden from sight by green shades. But the wealth of paintings on the walls and the intricacy of the interiors leave the visitor enthralled. Also called the Summer Palace, Tipu used this as an alternative resort to receive visitors and conduct durbars.

There is a good collection of period furniture, coins, fabulous paintings, murals and plenty of historical data of Hyder Ali and Tipu's conquests in the museum within the palace.

The painting of Lord Cornwallis receiving the sons of Tipu Sultan as hostages by Robert Home touches the chords of your heart. One of the most impressive items on display is a world-famous portrait of Tipu by the great German neoclassical painter Johann Zoffany. Probably the closest likeness you'll ever see of the great king.



Devotees near the holy idol

If you've carried lunch with you, the palace lawns are an ideal place to idle around under trees which are full of great big bumblebee hives and monkeys. The palace is on the road to Ganjam and Sangama.

◆ **Entry fee** Indians ₹25, Foreigners ₹300 **Video camera** ₹25 (in the garden only) **Timings** 9am-5pm

NOTE Still cameras not allowed inside the museum. Video cameras may be used with permission from the Director General, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi

Gumbaz

'Tiger of Mysuru' Tipu Sultan, his father Hyder Ali, his mother, sons and other members of the royal family lie buried in this splendid monument called Gumbaz. The inscription in Persian on its western

wall says '*from this the moon has borrowed its light*' and refers to it as the 'House of Sleep'. Tipu's favourite tiger stripes cover the walls. At the Dariya Daulat Bagh, turn left and continue along the Sangama Road till you reach a fork in the road. Here, turn right towards the Gumbaz and the Sangama.

◆ **Timings** 8am-6pm

Sangama

The Sangama, 3km south of the town centre, is where the two branches of the river Cauvery reunite in joyful exuberance. A pilgrim's chamber lies in ruins just before the steps that lead down the small ghat to the water. The tiniest of shrines marks the spot where the waters meet. The river is full of coracles taking pilgrims for a ritual dip.

Dodda Ghosai Ghat

This bathing spot, with a **Sri Radha Madhava Temple** by the banks, is nice enough for a dip in the Cauvery, but watch out for the water level. It's not a good idea to wade too deep into the waters. The temple is run by the Narasingha Chaitanya Mutt and is open to visitors only on Sundays (6am-6pm). To get there, turn right at the 200-year-old **Abbe Dubois Church** opposite Ganjam on the Sangama Road.

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→ GETTING THERE

Air Nearest airport: Bengaluru International Airport (125km/3 hrs). Taxi to Srirangapatna costs ₹2,800-5,000; KSRTC Volvo bus fare: ₹150-300
Rail Srirangapatna Railway Station is connected to cities like Bengaluru, Mysuru and Hubballi by trains like Chamrajanagar-Tirupati Express, Bengaluru-Chamarajanagar Passenger, Mysuru-Talguppa Express, Vishwamanava Express, Chamundi Express. Rickshaw fare from Railway Station to Main Town (1km) is ₹30-40
Road Srirangapatna lies on the Bengaluru (125km/3 hrs)-Mysuru (22km/45 min) Highway. Taxi or bus would be the best option from either of the two major cities. **Bus** State and private buses ply regularly from Bengaluru; KSRTC/private buses from Bengaluru (2-3 hrs/ ₹150-700); from Mysuru (1-2 hrs/ ₹35-60)

Karighatta

About 1km after the **Wellesley Bridge** back towards Bengaluru, cross the bridge over the Lokapavani River and turn right towards Bannur. Another 3km further, you reach the 450 steps that lead up to the **Venkataramana Temple** atop Karighatta hillock. The sweet smell of jaggery being made in the huts nearby permeates the air. The trek up is worth it for the temple is situated in a large compound fringed with tamarind and gooseberry trees.

WHERE TO EAT

Eat at the resorts, or at the highway eateries. The latter serve only *thalis* and *dosas*, but are fresh and safe for kids. A few bakeries in the heart of town make excellent fresh bread, biscuits, chips and cake. The food in the resorts isn't inviting enough, but they do have tables laid out near the river. Mayura River View is a restaurant and bar that serves North and South Indian cuisine.

WHERE TO STAY

Srirangapatna offers good options, most by the river. **Amblee Holiday Resort** (Mobile: 09341912221, 09845002665; Tariff: ₹1,500-3,000; TE) has a swimming pool and a small boating stretch along the Cauvery, peopled by ducks that surround your boat. Fishing is part of the package. The Cauvery river flows behind as well, providing a soothing view. **Hotel Mayura Riverview** (Tel: 08236-297114, Cell: 08970650004/





In nearby Pandavapura, the Melukote kalyani (pond) is a major attraction

99; Tariff: ₹2,000-5,000) has 25 rooms along the riverbank and a small playground. The location is magical. At night you are lulled to sleep by the melody of the river that lies a stone's throw away from your room.

Balaji Garden Resort (Cell: 09844892031, 08105996260; Tariff: ₹700-1,500), on the Mysuru-Bengaluru road, near Paschima Vahini, has 46 rooms, most with attached bathrooms, and a vegetarian restaurant. There is no pool and playground at this hotel.

Young Island Resort (Tel: 08236-297333, Cell: 098545190925, 09880191272; Tariff: ₹2,900-4,000), with 22 rooms, is located 3km away at Paschima Vahini Circle and offers a restaurant and swimming pool.

For more hotels, see *Srirangapatna Accommodation Listings on pages 444-445*

AROUNDS

Ranganathittu (4km)

About 3km off the Bengaluru-Mysuru highway lies this hidden gem. Six isolated islets on the river Cauvery make up the **Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary**. The sanctuary has paddy fields, streams, dense foliage, and hundreds of migratory birds from as far as Siberia and Australia.

A **dam** built in the 1700s created the islets and made the place fertile for birds. A tree-lined path leads to the river from where you can take the 15-minute boat ride around the islets. The best time to visit is December to April. The river here teems with fish. The banks are heavy with reed beds, eucalyptus and acacia. The islands are covered with bamboo, arjun and pandanus trees; and flocks of birds. The sanctuary is

home to marsh crocodiles as well.

◆ **Entry fee** Adult ₹50, Child ₹25, Foreigners ₹300 **Timings** 8.30am-5.30pm **Vehicle fee** Bus ₹125, Car ₹30, **Contact** Deputy Conservator of Forests, Wildlife Division, Mysuru; Tel: 0821-2481159

◆ **Location** Ranganathittu is 18 km away from Mysuru **Air** Mysuru Rail Mysuru Junction

Pandavapura (10km)

The small town of Pandavapura has an interesting mythological tale. It is said the demon Bakasura lived here and harassed the villagers who sent him a cartful of eatables along with a person to devour daily. That is why the place was originally called 'Hiri Yede' (*yede* means food). But the Pandava brother Bheema killed the demon and the place was renamed Pandavapura. The town is also home to the only temple in India that is dedicated to Ahalya, sage Gautama's wife, Lord Brahma's daughter. From Srirangapatna's Baburayanakoppal Circle, turn right for Pandavapura.

Mysuru (12km)

See page 104

Mahadevapura (13km)

Drive 8km further up from Karighatta to this village, famous for its movie connections. Many regional movies



Amazing rock structures at Thonnur Lake

have a couple of scenes shot here, as it provides an ideal backdrop for a rustic setting. The Cauvery is particularly enticing here.

Kere Thonnur (14km)

Drive to Pandavapura, then take the immediate left before the town. Continue past the lake till you see a small bridge. Take the immediate left turn. About 2km down the road, a board announces Kere Thonnur. Tall trees along the shores enhance the beauty of **Thonnur Lake**. Sail around the lake in round boats. The temples here date back to the Chola era. Tipu called this lake Moti Talab. On the way up, stop and get under the falls created by the lake water. ■

#Awesomemkarnataka





Splendour of Mysuru's Dasara Procession

SAIBAL DAS

MYSURU

THE CITY BEAUTIFUL

■ ARCHANA RAI

To veer off State Highway 17 and pass through the arched gate to Mysuru city is a symbolic act. One leaves behind the frenetic bustle and the determined post-modernist throb of Bengaluru, Mysuru's eastern neighbour and, in many ways, the gracious old city's upstart sibling.

Until 1973, when Mysore State was renamed Karnataka, it was the spirit of Mysuru that imbued the cultural and social life of the region. To be a cultivated person was to be Mysorean. But through the 70s, as

Bengaluru embraced science and strode ahead into the emerging world of technology, Mysuru remained enmeshed in a time-warp of old-world royalty.

The Wodeyars made Mysuru grand and irresistible, particularly so under the rule of Chikka Devaraja Wodeyar (1673-1704). He promoted art and literature, besides instituting large-scale administrative reforms. By the late 18th century, however, their sway over Mysuru weakened when their general, Hyder Ali, rebelled to establish a capital in the nearby Srirangapatna. The young Muslim kingdom barely had the

time to consolidate itself when the British started interfering. Hyder Ali's son Tipu Sultan bravely took on the challenge until he was killed in the Battle of Mysore in 1799, earning the grudging admiration of his enemies, who nicknamed him the 'Tiger of Mysore'.

The Wodeyars returned to rule Mysuru, subject to the British writ. Once again, Mysuru revived its links to art and learning. It's a tradition that lives on till today, like the die-hard fans of RK Narayan's *Tales from Malgudi* who'll swear they can recognise its landmarks everywhere.

It's a city that harks back to a past when the finer things in life still mattered. It's a place where time is measured in seasons and not seconds, and where a horse-drawn *tonga* still continues to run alongside an autorickshaw.

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

Mysuru's glorious past does not just live on in its royal edifices, churches, or museums with rich collections. It's palpable in the unhurried yet often grand lifestyle of its people, and its literature and performing arts. Cap the city experience with a Mysorean sunset. "Even today I would assert, after having visited many parts of the world, that nowhere can you witness such masterpiece sunsets as in Mysore..." wrote RK Narayan in *My Days*.

The palaces

Home to the Wodeyars, the Indo-Saracenic **Amba Vilas Palace**, also

known as Mysore Palace, was built in 1912 — a fire had burnt down the old wooden residence in 1897. Designed by Henry Irwin (whose crowning work the Viceregal Lodge still lords over Shimla), this palace is dominated by domes, turrets and colonnades. Beautifully restored and maintained, the palace is a treasure trove of art antiques and rare collectibles. In the **Marriage Pavilion** (open to the public only during Dasara) you can see the chandeliers, cast-iron pillars from Glasgow and a Belgian glass-decorated ceiling. This is also where the jewel-studded 14th-century **Golden Throne** is placed. It is believed that under all that decoration it is supposed to be made of fig wood.

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→ FAST FACTS

When to go All year round

Tourist offices

● Office of the Deputy Director 📍

Department of Tourism

Mysuru Division, Hotel Mayura,
Hoysala Complex, JLB Road,
Mysuru

Tel: 0821-2422096 (DD Office)

Cell: 09620270688 (DTC)

🌐 karnatakaturism.org

● KSTDC Transport Wing 📍

Yatri Niwas Building, JLB Road

Tel: 2423652

Cell: 08970656400 (7am-9pm)

STD code 0821

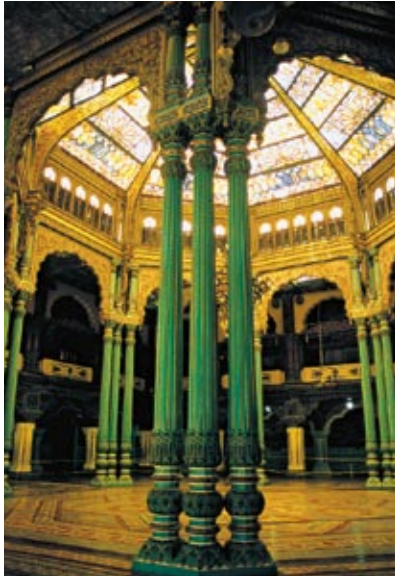
◆ **Entry fee** Adult ₹70, Child ₹30, children below 10 yrs free **Timings** 10am-5.30pm, open all days

Next to the palace is the **Maharaja's Residence**, now a museum with a good collection of art and artefacts. Normally lit on Sundays and public holidays, the grand structure is a treat, especially during Dasara when every evening its entire panoply of 97,000 bulbs shine bright and illuminate everything around.

◆ **Entry fee** Adult ₹70, Child ₹30 **Timings** 10am-5.30pm, open all days **Cameras** Not allowed

The **Jagan Mohan Palace** houses the **Sri Jayachamarajendra Art Gallery** with its collection of Raja Ravi Varma and Nicholas Roerich paintings. Ancient musical instruments, ivory, sculptures and

Interiors of Jaghan Mohan Palace



SAIBAL DAS

Tanjore and Mysuru gold leaf paintings also form a part of the delectable collection.

◆ **Entry fee** Under revision **Timings** 10am-5pm, open all days

Located 5km from Amba Vilas Palace, within the sprawling campus of the University of Mysore, lies the beautiful **Jayalakshmi Vilas Palace** built in 1905. It houses one of Mysuru's best landmarks the **Folklore Museum**. With over 6,500 articles on display, this museum is one of the biggest of its kind in Asia.

◆ **Entry fee** Adult ₹15, Child ₹5 **Timings** 10am-1.15pm, 2.30pm-5pm, closed on Sundays and public holidays **Cameras** Not allowed

The second largest palace in the city, the **Lalitha Mahal**, is a spectacular white stone building, situated at the foot of the Chamundi Hills. Built in 1913 by Krishnaraja Wodeyar IV, it served as a palace for guests. The tradition of hospitality continues with ITDC now running it as a 5-star hotel.

Atop Chamundi Hills lies the abandoned royal retreat of **Rajendra Vilas**. Its main draw is its spectacular view of Mysuru.

Rail Museum

Located behind the railway station, this little known but impressive museum has locomotive coaches, paintings and photographs, narrating the 'Rail Story'. The prize exhibit is the **Maharaja's Saloon**, crafted for the Wodeyar rulers in 1899.

◆ **Entry** Adult ₹30, Child ₹15 **Timings** 10am-1pm, 3pm-5pm, Mondays closed **Cameras** Free



PRASHANT PANJIAR

The Gothic spires of St Philomena's Church

St Philomena's Church

Mysuru's only British edifice, on Ashoka Road, north of the Amba Vilas Palace, is this Gothic church built in 1931. It's an imposing structure with impressive stained-glass windows and twin spires that stretch 175ft into the sky.

◆ **Entry** Free **Timings** 6am-7pm, open all days **Cameras** Not allowed

Chamundeshwari Temple

Perched atop the Chamundi Hills, at a height of 1,000ft on the eastern edge of Mysuru, sits the 11th-century **Chamundeshwari Temple**, dedicated to goddess Durga, the family deity of the Wodeyars. You can either climb the 1,000 steps to the temple or drive up the winding *ghat* roads. As you approach the temple, you can see the towering

statue of the demon Mahishasura, who was slain by the goddess. Nearby is the monolithic Nandi.

◆ **Entry** Ordinary *darshan* free, special *darshan* ₹100 **Timings** 6am-2pm, 3.30pm-6pm and 7.30pm-9pm; its open on all days

Other Sights

Over 60,000 palm-leaf manuscripts in Sanskrit and South Indian languages are housed in the **Oriental Research Institute**. Located behind Maharaja's College, its prized possessions includes Prof R Shama Sastry's translation of Kautilya's *Arthashastra*. It's one of Mysuru's many glorious treasures.

◆ **Entry** Free **Timings** 10am-5.30pm, closed Sundays/ Second Saturdays

To experience Mysuru at its best, simply walk. The 150-acre **Karanji**

Kere (next to the zoo) is refreshing. Skirting the Manasagangotri Campus is **Kukkarnahalli Kere**, renowned writer RK Narayan's muse.

RK Narayan House

For those readers who loved the iconic *Malgudi Days*, a walk around its vastly popular author RK Narayan's House in Yadvagiri can be a thrill, because this is where he wrote his now classic stories.

The house has been restored with the help of the Mysuru City Corporation and has been transformed into a museum now, featuring the books that Narayan wrote, the desk and chair he used, his clothes, the Padma Bhushan and the Padma Vibhushan bestowed upon him — along with photographs documenting his life.

Mahishasura statue at Chamundi Hills



ANURAG MALLICK

It also features vignettes from the TV series *Malgudi Days*, directed by the late Shankar Nag, which made Narayan a household name across India. Time to return to old favourites like *Swami and Friends*, *Waiting for the Mahatma...*etc.

Melody Wax Museum

This heritage building, less than 3 km away from Mysore Palace houses life-size wax statues dressed in traditional attire along with a wide range of musical instruments, said to be the largest collection in Karnataka. The museum was created in honour of musicians from across the world, comprising 19 galleries each with a different display of music and art. **Entry** Rs 30 **Timings** 9.30 am - 7.00 pm

Regional Museum of Natural History (RMNH)

A visit to the RMNH in Mysuru can be a pretty enlightening experience as it is highly learning-oriented. Opened in May 1995, the museum, which nestles by the Karanji Lake with the Chamundi Hills as backdrop, is a popular stopover for the throngs of visitors who pass through this historic city with its palaces and historic and globally renowned Dasara celebrations.

Browse at leisure amongst the models, translites, AV aids, dioramas, thematic, interactive and participatory exhibits, which focus on the natural world in all its intriguing diversity, be it the floral, faunal and geological wealth of South India (with special emphasis

DEBANJAN BOSE



RK Narayan House, where he wrote many of his hugely popular stories

on the Western Ghats), or the ecological interrelationship among plants and animals with emphasis on conservation of nature and natural resources, and much more.

Mysore Zoo

One of the oldest zoos in India, the Mysore Zoo provides shelter to a wide range of flora and fauna. It has spacious enclosures both for the animals. Also in abundance to be found here are various rare species of plants and trees. Over 2 million tourists visit the zoo annually.

Walkabouts

Steeped in southern gentility, Mysuru simply lends itself to fine walks. The city-town is a diffidently colonial throwback with possibly the highest per capita institutional presence

anywhere in the country — everything from the Postal Training Institute to something important sounding in linguistics. What this means, essentially, is that largish swathes of land are left free for a wild growth of trees and other flora, managed with adorably varied degrees of dedication, around low-slung, slanted-roof homesteads. So, walk by on a nippy day with the promise of rain, and the green somehow seems greener against the pall of grey skies.

SHOPPING

For shopaholics, Mysuru's well-planned markets can be a treat. Walk into the **Devaraj Urs Market** — named after a notable former chief minister of Karnataka — off Sayyaji

Rao Road. This market is a delightful medley of colours and smells. You will, among many other things, find Mysuru's very own special fragrant jasmine and the tangy betel leaf. Also, on Sayyaji Rao Road is the government-run **Cauvery Arts Emporium**, known for its genuine sandalwood and ivory inlay work. If you are looking for antiques, check out **Nayanotsav**, near the zoo.

Drop by at the **Government Silk Weaving Factory** on Mananthavady Road, where you can watch the famous Mysuru silk saris being woven. The factory also houses a retail outlet, besides one on KR Circle. To buy their soap, contact their Bengaluru head office.

Yummy Mysore pak and dosa delight



Photographs: SHUTTERSTOCK

WHAT TO EAT

Taking a tiffin break in Mysuru is the most delicious thing to do. The city offers terrific 'set' *dosas* (fluffy, soft pancakes made of beaten rice, served in sets of three), *masala dosas*, *uppittu*, *rava idli* and Mysuru *rasam*. Tasty savouries like *churmuris* and peanut *masala* also entice. But the most outstanding feature of the city is the web of bakeries set up by Mysuru's Vaishnavite community, the Iyengars. Try out the veg bun cakes and *nipattus* at the **Iyengar Bakeries** on Devaraj Urs Road and the nearby Sayyaji Rao Road. The sublime Mysuru *rasam* is arrived at by adding a freshly ground *masala* of coriander seeds, dry red chilli and desiccated coconut. The crisp Mysore *dosa* is lashed on the inside with a light spread of a tangy coconut and red chilli paste. And how can anyone forget the Mysore *pak* — if ever there was a simple recipe that called for the greatest expertise, it had to be the sweetmeat that Mysuru made famous. The perfect *pak* will melt in your mouth even before you can say Mysuru.

The restaurant at **Hotel Dasaprakash** is recommended for excellent South Indian thalis. **Myleri Hotel** has a melt-in-the-mouth *sagu dosa* and some superb filter coffee. **Bombay Tiffany's** high teas are exceptionally great. The **Nalpak restaurants** in Ittigegudu, Kuvempunagar, and VV Mohalla are the best places to head for sumptuous delicacies like *akki* and *ragi roti*, and the very spicy *bisi-bele-huli-anna* (hot-lentil-tamarind-rice).



Grand Mysore Palace

The focal point of the city's meticulous planning, the city's signature and the home of the Wodeyars was designed by the English architect Henry Irwin. Built on the ashes of the old wooden palace (gutted in a fire during the February 1897 marriage of Princess Jayalakshamanni) between 1897 and 1912, this palace (also known as Amba Vilas Palace) exudes a grandeur that is quite unmatched.

The Durbar Hall with its ornate and sculpted pillars, the Kalyana Mantapa, the jewel-encrusted Golden Throne (displayed only during the Dasara celebrations; see page 119) and the Golden Howdah (elephant seat) are some of the other treasures of the palace. The walled palace complex also houses several temples and shrines and the **Residential Museum**, run by Srikantadutta Wodeyar, the scion of the erstwhile Mysuru royals. The museum maintains a royal collection of silverware, chandeliers and furniture, crystal, royal

trousseau and much more. Ornate as the palace is in its royal purple garb, when it's illuminated you have to be there to believe how it feels to see it when 97,000 electric bulbs light up at once.

Visitors are required to explore the palace interiors barefoot; shoes and sandals are removed just before entering the palace. These can be secured (free of charge) at the stand located by the entrance gate. You must leave your camera here as well (fee ₹5) as no photography is permitted inside.

◆ **Palace entry fee** Adult ₹70, Child ₹30, Children below 10 yrs free, Student groups get a discount **Timings** 10am-5pm **Illumination timings** During the 10 days of Dasara, 7pm-9pm; General/ national holidays and Sundays, 7pm-8pm

◆ **Residential Museum entry fee** Per person ₹40 **Timings** 10am-5pm **Contact** Deputy Director, Mysore Palace, Tel: 0821-2421051, 2434425

WHERE TO STAY

A laid-back stopover city en route the Kodagu, Wayanad, and the Nilgiris, Mysuru has plenty of hotels to choose from. Book in advance.

→ GETTING THERE

Air Mysuru Airport is connected only to Chennai International Airport by Trujet, and Chennai is connected to all metros and major cities in India and several destinations in Asia and Europe.

However, Kempegowda International Airport in Bengaluru (175km/ 3½ hrs) is connected to all metros and major cities in India and most destinations in Asia and Europe. Taxi from Bengaluru costs ₹9-20 per km to Mysuru

Rail Over a dozen daily connections, including the fast Shatabdi, Rajyarani, and Tippu expresses run between Bengaluru and Mysuru Junction. Mysuru Express is a very convenient connection with Chennai. Yeshwantpur Express is a good connection with Mangaluru

Road From Bengaluru, SH17 via Mandya and Srirangapatna is the most used route, a comfortable drive down a well-serviced road all the way to Mysuru. Alternately, take NH209 till Malavalli and then turn right to Mysuru via Bannur.

Bus KSRTC has Rajahamsa (₹196-220), Airavat (₹294), Airavat Club Class (₹326-331), Karnataka Sarige (₹129-136), Non-AC Sleeper (₹242) buses from Bengaluru's Satellite Bus Station

The advantage of location goes to **The Viceroy** (Tel: 0821-2428001; Tariff: ₹1,700-6,900), which faces the Mysore Palace. At the upper end of the scale is the **Hotel Southern Star Mysuru** (Tel: 2426426, 2427427; Cell 09448067750; Tariff: ₹6,000-12,000). **Karnataka Tourism's Mayura Hoysala** (Tel: 2426160; Tariff: ₹1,100-2,300; TE; dorm ₹3,200-4,000; TE) is a good option but book well in advance. **Kings Kourt Hotel** (Tel: 2421142; Tariff: ₹3,500-5,500; TE) is nearby.

The friendly, tidy and wi-fi-enabled **Mauve Orchid** (Tel: 4191965; Tariff: ₹2,000; TE), a B&B set in a century-old property, is tucked quietly behind a department store and health club in a central location. Of the 12 quaint, spacious 'heritage' rooms on the ground floor, two are air-conditioned. There are also four contemporarily furnished 'apartment rooms' with glass-cubicle showers and balconies on the first floor, often offered as pairs with a common living area for even big families.

Closer to the city centre, the business traveller's choice would be the compact and efficient **Hotel MB International Palace Side** (Cell: 09739786223; Tariff: ₹2,000-4,000), near the bus stand and part of the hotel chain with properties spread across Karnataka.

In a similar price band is **Hotel Siddhartha** (Tel: 2522999/ 888; Tariff: ₹2,340-5,400; TE). **Hotel Dasaprakash Paradise** (Tel: 2410366, 4008400; Tariff: ₹1,500-5,500; TE) in Yadavagiri and **Ginger**

Courtesy SOUTHERN STAR



Hotel Southern Star Mysuru is among the upscale properties in the city

Mysore (Tel: 6633333; Tariff: ₹2,399; TE) in Nazarabad are other good budget options. **Windflower Resort** (Tel: 2522500; Website: thewindflower.com; Tariff: ₹7,970-25,240) fills the vacuum in contemporary luxury at Mysuru — it's popular for its tranquil yet easily accessible location, understated aesthetics, spacious rooms, friendly service, good food and spa, although the lone restaurant gets overcrowded on weekends and in high season, while the pool gets mixed reviews. All rooms offer views of a waterbody at the centre of the property and come with private balconies.

Neither particularly central nor off the map, **Jade Garden** (Tel: 4008222; Website: jadegarden.in; Tariff: ₹3,540-4,800) sits pretty on a wide but quiet side street near the bustling Law Courts. This is a mid-range

hotel that successfully aspires to a qualitatively professional standard. The immaculate rooms and suites, all of them air-conditioned, are done up in sober beiges and browns. The bathrooms aren't dinky either. They have two restaurants and a buffet breakfast on the house.

On the Outskirts

Such a legendary address is the public sector 'Ashok Elite' **Lalitha Mahal Palace** (Tel: 2526100, 2470222; Tariff: ₹4,000-35,000; TE) that its website gives its location as 'Mysuru 570028'; we're assured post gets delivered that way. The palace, built in 1921 by the city's ruling Wodeyars, once hosted the viceroy in the 2,000 sq ft suite that now bears his name. There's an indefinable charm about this extravagant property. Yet its

cheapest rooms (best rates are available online) are astonishingly affordable. Lalitha Mahal Palace is superbly located at the foot of Chamundi Hills. Opposite is the serene **Indus Valley Ayurvedic Centre** (Tel: 2473437; Tariff: ₹18,072-37,190 inclusive of meals, Mysuru Pickup/ drop, consultation with doctor, Ayurvedic treatments, yoga session), offering treatments and Ayurvedic vegetarian cuisine. Pitched for the yoga scene here, **Anokhi Garden** (Cell:08861600781; www.anokhigarden.in; Tariff: ₹1,500-2,000) is a longish way off from the centre of town. The charming guesthouse, run by Frenchwomen Marie and Flora, offers solar-heated

Intricate idol at Somnathapur Temple



ANURAG MALLICK

water, vegan food and awesome Continental breakfasts on weekends. There are four rooms (three are big, one is a bit smaller).

On the Mysuru-Nanjangud Road is **The Village Resort** (Tel: 2481310/766; Tariff: ₹6,500-12,000; TE; 2km from the city centre). **Grand Maurya Resort** (Cell 09902429378; Tariff: ₹3,500-4,000; TE) is on the Mysuru-Hunsur Road in Hinkal.

Top of the list in a city known for its palaces is **Green Hotel** (Tel: 4255000-02; Tariff: ₹2,440-6,797), near the university campus west of the city centre. Formerly the Chittaranjan Palace, its USP is environmentally sustainable tourism. On Sundays, it runs a green bazaar. Between 7am and 10am, one can pick up organically grown rice, honey, fruits and vegetables from all over Kodagu (Coorg).

For more details, see *Mysuru Accommodation Listings on pages 442-443*

AROUNDS

Srirangapatna (12km)

See page 96

Brindavan Gardens (18km)

Mysuru's *piece de resistance*, Brindavan Gardens, is to the north-west of the city, at the foot of the **Krishna Raja Sagar Dam**. Arrayed below the dam is the terraced and well-tended garden landscaped with fountains — one of them actually dances to music (**Timings** 6.30pm-7.30pm). It's great for a pleasant evening but tends to be crowded on weekends.

ALAMY IMAGES / INDIA PICTURE



The stunning, soothing interiors of Lalitha Mahal Palace hotel

◆ **Entry fee** Adult ₹20, Child ₹10
Timings 6.30am-9pm, open all days
Cameras Not allowed

Karighatta (20km)

Just outside of Mysuru to its north, is Karighatta, a place that resonates with Puranic lore. On the hillock here is the **Lord Srinivasa Temple**, believed to have been built by the sage Bhrigu. The temple is surrounded by tall slender grass known as *dharbe*, said to have grown from the skin shed by Lord Vishnu in his Varaha (boar) avatar.

Nanjangud (22km)

This beautiful and grand 11th-century Shiva temple is on the banks of the river Kabini, to the south-west of Mysuru. Devotees throng here for the healing powers of Shiva as **Lord Nanjundeswara**. On special

occasions of the temple, an emerald necklace given by Hyder Ali is placed around the *lingam*.

Somnathpur (35km)

Somnathpur, set on the banks of the Cauvery, is known for its historic temples. This region was ruled by several eminent dynasties, beginning with the Gangas in the 5th century, followed by the Cholas, the Hoysalas, and the feudatories of the Vijayanagara Empire right up to the 17th century. While historical records may sometimes falter, the region is rich in legend.

The **Keshava Temple** at Somnathpur, 30km from Talakad, stands in a square of modest houses. The Hoysalas were known for their temple-building and are credited with extending the Chalukyan style of temple architecture, and

combining the Dravidian and Indo-Aryan styles. An inscription inside the gateway says that this temple was built in 1268 by Somanatha Dandanayaka, a Hoysala general, in the reign of Narasimha III.

Melkote (40km)

North of Mysuru is Melkote, the spiritual centre of the Sri Vaishnavite Iyengars. The saint-philosopher Ramanujacharya is believed to have lived here for 14 years. The **Cheluvarayaswami Temple** has a collection of rare jewels, used to dress the deity, Vairamudi, during the temple festival.

Talakad (48km)

The capital of the Gangas, prized by the Hoysalas, Talakad became buried under sand in the course of its history. When the Wodeyar ruler of

Mysuru tried to force the widow of the local chieftain, Alamelamma, to part with her jewels, she condemned the city to a dirge of sand (and the Wodeyars to infertility) before jumping into the Cauvery. And so it came to be. The Archaeological Survey of India has, over the years, excavated many temples from the sand, though several are supposedly still buried to this day.

Talakad is known for the **panchalinga temples**, or the five *lingas*, said to be born of Shiva himself. Shiva as self-healer and naturopath, Vaidyanatheswara, presides in the **Vaidyanatheswara Temple**, a granite structure topped with a tower of mortar. A tiered *dhwaja-stambha* or flagpole stands in the courtyard. The walls of the temple have large sculptured panels of Shiva in his many avatars. Climb

View of the Melkote Yoganarasimha Temple from the summit



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Entrance to the Talakadu Vaidyanatheswara temple

a sand bank to get to the **Pathaleswara and Maruleswara temples**, which have just the cells containing the *linga*, without the grand superstructure, reputedly the oldest of the temples in Talakad.

For a lesiurely study of the two temple towns, stay overnight at **Jaladhama** (Cell: 09945695942; Tariff: ₹ 9,800 + meals per couple), a resort at Mudukuthore close to Talakad. There are many small eateries in Talakad and the **Udupi Mess** next to the Vaidyanatheswara Temple serves tasty veg meals.

◆ **Location** 35km or so from Mysuru Airport **Air** Mysuru **Rail** Mysuru Jn

Shivanasamudram (77km)

Shivanasamudram is the domain of Mother Nature. These hills are home to wild boar, peacocks, partridges, elephants and even the occasional

panther. Herds of elephants have been known to venture as near as the village outskirts in these regions. As a possible day trip from Bengaluru, this is the place for an ideal weekend break. The Cauvery river splits into two streams here — **Barachukki** and **Gaganachukki**. About 9km by road from Georgia Sunshine Village, turn left at Panditahalli and drive to Shri Vishveshwaraya Hydroelectric Plant, labelled the 'Bluff'. From Bluff, it is a short 5-min drive to the waterfalls. The sight of cascades of water spreading out over two vast hillsides greet you here. The water is being diverted to feed what was the first hydroelectric plant in Asia.

Gaganachukki has a **dargah** on the opposite bank, a short drive across to the other hillside. A word of caution though — in these

regions, the falls represent a literal Xanadu for boisterous local revellers and their ilk. The falls are, therefore, best avoided on public holidays while being quite acceptable on weekends. Don't swim here, it is treacherous and mishaps have occurred. A couple of food stalls and a few vendors selling fresh coconut water and locally grown gooseberries liberally spiced with red chilli powder complete the experience.

Barachukki is just beyond the dargah, a few kilometres away. The falls here form a sylvan, deep pool. You can swim here or even catch a coracle ride.

The **villages** of Malavalli, Panditahalli, Manchanahalli, Hebbani and Shimsapura seem forgotten by time. Do not miss the traditional Friday market where you can purchase some unusual items.

A forest by daytime is harsh and distant, by night it becomes an enigma. A **drive at night** is a great way to indulge in some post-dinner thrills and spot some wildlife.

Where to Stay and Eat

Georgia Sunshine Village (Tel: 08231-247646, 247783, Cell: 09845754661; Tariff: ₹4,500-5,500, with meals) is the only place to stay in Shivanasamudram. Facilities offered here include a swimming

pool, games room, lounge and library. The tariff includes bonfires, a morning trek, all meals, tea and coffee. Book well in advance.

◆**Location** In the Mandya district, on the banks of the Cauvery river **Air Bengaluru Rail** Not suitable for going to Shivanasamudram

MM Hills (112km)

Male Mahadeshwara Hills, also known as MM Hills (3,000ft), is a sacred spot about 140km from Mysuru. Surrounded by dense forests, the ancient temple here attracts not only devotees but nature lovers as well. The temple is dedicated to Lord Mahadeshwara, believed to be the incarnation of Lord Shiva. The legend is that Lord Mahadeshwara still performs penance in the temple, in the form of a Shiva *linga*. Thousands of pilgrims from Karnataka and Tamil Nadu throng the hills to take a holy dip in the Antargange near the temple. This water flow erupts from the ground and its exact origin is still a mystery.

Pujas are performed thrice a day and festivals like Shivaratri and Diwali are celebrated. The temple provides lodging to devotees in its guesthouses, which have modern amenities. The best time to visit is during Mahalaya Amavasya, Dasara, Diwali and Karthika Masa. ■



Photographs by SAIBAL DAS

A grand procession in front of the splendid Mysore Palace

MYSORE DASARA

■ AMIT MAHAJAN

Dasara in Mysuru is different from the northern Dussehra; it has nothing at all to do with Rama, his story or his triumph over Ravana. India's major religions are highly accommodating organisms; as they spread, they absorb the religious practices of their new followers. Festivals thereby come to contain within them multiple celebrations, joys and memories of various communities, ritualised, evolved and then assimilated over long periods; gods and goddesses get multiple names and stories. In Mysuru, Dasara is a festival devoted to the goddess Chamundeshwari,

who killed the demon Mahishasura, and who literally lords it over the city from her hilltop abode. The demon is said to have lived in these hills and gave Mysuru its name.

The festival became institutionalised here and attracted state patronage during the reign of the Vijayanagara rulers. An Italian traveller, Nicolo Dei Conti, witnessed the celebrations in 1420 and left a detailed account — the Wodeyar rulers made Chamunda their tutelary deity, and began the tradition of the regal Jambu Savari in 1805 during the reign of Krishnaraja Wodeyar III. The king conducted a special durbar in the Mysore Palace during Dasara, which was attended by members of

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the royal family, special invitees, officials and the masses. With the amalgamation of Mysore State into the Indian Union, the pageant is now flagged off by the chief minister or governor of Karnataka, and attended by the scion of the Wodeyar family. Hence, the celebrations in the Mysore Palace are quite a spectacle to witness.

THE FESTIVAL

I am up and about early on the 10th and final day of the festival. My hotel balcony offers a view of the palace and I can see an insistent stream of people making its way towards the palace gate. The festivities drape everything in view, connect all of it together — palace,



roads, trees, shops, police, their mounts and people — infect every heart and produce a mega celebration, the Mysore Dasara.

The crowd outside the palace and along the Dasara procession route is unbelievably thick. There are cordons, trying to contain the bodies and their fervour, but they spill over, on to the road, trees, rooftops and just about every perch in sight. The overwhelming faith of this population gives the festival its sustenance. The faithful have traversed many miles, have come in from the surrounding villages and towns, will wait hours, come rain or sun, to get the fleeting opportunity to pray to the deity who is royally touring the city in a procession.

This procession, called the Jambu Savari, is the culmination of the 10-day long Dasara festival. The Mysore Dasara celebrations are spread out across several locations in the city such as Jagan Mohan Palace, Town Hall, and Kalamandira. However, the most important venue is in the grounds of the 20th-century Mysuru Palace. This becomes an open-air setting with the majestically lit palace providing a stunning backdrop to classical Indian performances. Every evening, as the sun sets and spreads its reddish glow in the western skies, nearly 97,000 palace lights come on, all at once, converting the gigantic structure into a dazzling silhouette and leaving the assembled crowd agape.

The palace is also where the Jambu Savari begins. A puja is held in a temple within the palace



The illuminated splendour of the palace (left); Colour and action at Dasara festival

complex, after which the procession is inaugurated by the governor and the scion of the Wodeyar royals; at around 2pm, they climb a stage and shower flowers on the idol of Chamundeshwari, sitting in a golden howdah atop Balaram.

Balaram is the elephant for the day, clothed in the most brilliant blues, yellows and magentas. Amidst sounds of cannon fire, several pachyderms accompany waves of dance groups, music bands, horses, camels, vintage cars and colourful tableaux out from the palace gates on to Mysuru's streets. The grand pageant moves at a snail's pace and takes about three hours to cover the 4.5km stretch to the Banni Mantap

grounds. The entire route, cordoned off with ropes and with people packed on either side of the road, is heavily policed. Moving in the thick crowd, I realise that it is here that the real throbbing heart, the spirit of this lively celebration, lies. These crowds give life to the exploits of the performers; without this adoring audience, the entire show is but an empty routine. The crowds love the display, and clap, laugh and scream. But it's the diminutive idol of the goddess that has the biggest, the most significant presence. Crowds greet her with worshipping cries, the young run after her, the elderly plaintively bow to her, as the 10-day-long fiesta comes to an end. ■



GETTY IMAGES

BANDIPUR TIGER RESERVE

LIFELINE FOR CONSERVATION

■ RANEE SAHANEY AND
RAMAN KUMAR

Elephants...tigers...sandalwood and teak...Exotic. Alluring. Endangered. All prey to rampant development and man's relentless abuse of Nature's bounteous largesse. Sequestered amongst the tropical forestlands of the deep south, Bandipur Tiger Reserve, one of India's oldest and finest game parks, is valiantly fighting on to preserve Karnataka's monumental

natural heritage. Its ecotourism warriors are working apace to ensure that generations to come will continue to delight in its amazing wildlife and botanical discoveries. Given the status of a reserve in 1932, Bandipur is also one of the best managed tiger reserves, blessed with a provenance of careful preservation of this habitat with its varied vegetation, exotic mammals, avifauna and insect population, from as far back as the early 20th century by people of foresight.

The king of the Bandipur jungles

It's the 21st century and driving through the pristine swathes of the reserve, I'm shocked out of my reverie by the intrusion of the roar of a bus spewing smoke and merrily racing down one of the two national highways running through the reserve that connect Gundlupet and Wayanad and Gundlupet and Ooty. No wonder there are increasing instances of animals getting killed — and, because of the sound and light disturbance, being driven out of the forests — resulting in heightened cases of man-animal conflict. The on-going crescendo of

objections from many quarters to the ban on night driving through the reserve appears to be only strengthening the resolve of conservationists to maintain the status quo. The case is pending in the Supreme Court. I've been so pleased to learn that in a recent move by the Forest Department, visitors from June 2019 have to go outside the park to get their tickets, now available at the new counter at STPF Campus of Melukamanahalli, near Anjaneyaswamy Temple, from where they can also board their


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→ FAST FACTS

When to go April to January is a good time to visit, but the best animal sightings are from September to December. The park is sometimes closed from February to April due to heavy forest fires

Go there for Tigers, elephants, gaur
Wildlife/ Forest Dept offices

- Bandipur Range Office 
- Tel: 08229-236043
- Conservator of Forests & Directors  
- Gundlupet, Ooty-Coimbatore Road,
Chamarajanagar
Tel: 08226-236043 (Online booking)
Tel: 295004 (Reservations,)
- Cell: 07760407576 (Deputy Forest
Range Officer)

 bandipurtigerreserve.in (online booking)

STD code Bandipur 08229

safari vehicles. I remember earlier we had to drive about 5km into the forest to reach the ticket counter. The intent is to further cut down the disturbance caused by human movement inside the forest.

Previously the exclusive game preserve of the Mysuru royals, the reserve was drawn under the umbrella of Project Tiger in 1973 — ranking high amongst the very first nine tiger reserves in the country for the conservation of the rapidly dwindling numbers of the apex predator of the Indian jungles. By 1985, its extended sprawl of 874.20

sq km was declared the Bandipur National Park. Subsequent additions of land have expanded the total area of the reserve to 912.04 sq km.

Sprawled along Mysuru and Chamarajanagar districts in the foothills of the 'Blue Mountains' — the stunning Nilgiri Range — Bandipur Tiger Reserve and National Park, one of India's Mega Diversity Areas, derives even greater ecological significance by being part of the contiguous swathe of forestlands and savannah grasslands that include those of the Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary in Tamil Nadu, Nagarahole National Park, again in Karnataka and the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary in Kerala. Bandipur is an intrinsic component of the 5520 sq km stretch comprising India's first biosphere reserve: the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve.

Both the elephant and the tiger are critical for the ecosystem of this constantly under-threat landscape — a stunning bio-geographic zone comprising generous chunks of wild spaces of the Western Ghats, the misty Nilgiris and the splendid vistas of the Deccan Plateau. The contiguous forested stretch, of Bandipur National Park, Nagarahole National Park, Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary, and Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary, is home to the world's single largest Asiatic elephant populace. Karnataka alone, according to a 2017 wild elephant census, has more than 6,000 of these gentle giants (housed in the protected environs of Bandipur, Bahdra and Nagarhole).


SHUTTERSTOCK



A spotted deer and peafowl in the wild

What's deeply concerning is the wrecking of this critical natural corridor by rampant development, making the wildlife exceedingly vulnerable to man-animal conflict issues. Shrinking terrain, shifting habitats, forest fires and changing monsoon patterns are now par for the course, robbing the wildlife the space it needs to roam, hunt and mate. Its precious botanical plenitude has suffered too. Bandipur's great treasure, its elephants, continue to be ruthlessly targeted by poachers for their ivory to feed a flourishing international market. And the poor tiger? Tiger parts, too, are big business.

The latest tiger census ranks Karnataka with Madhya Pradesh (Bandhavgarh) for the high density of its tiger populace. The tiger census conducted in 2018 (as part of the All-India Tiger Estimation 2018 or AITE-2018) covered five tiger reserves (Bandipur, Bhadra, BRT, Kali, and Nagarahole, a national park), Kudremukh, and three wildlife sanctuaries (Pushpagiri, Brahmagiri, and Talacauvery) in Karnataka, revealed that Karnataka had one of the highest tiger populations in the country. In Bandipur alone, from January 8 to 13, there were sightings of as many as 18 tigers, 8 leopards, 224 elephants, 63 wild dogs, 56



→ **GETTING THERE**

Air Nearest airport: Mysuru International Airport (75km/1.5-2 hrs); Taxi from Mysuru to Bandipur NP costs ₹2,000-2,500; KSRTC Volvo bus fare ₹250-300

Rail Nearest railhead: Mysuru (80km/2 hrs) is well connected to all major cities. Bus from Mysuru to the Bandipur checkpost costs ₹80. Taxi fare is ₹2,000-2,500

Road Bandipur NP is located on the Mysuru-Ooty Highway and is well connected by road. Regular buses are available from Mysuru (2 hrs) and from Bengaluru (5 hrs), Taxi fare from Bengaluru ₹6,000. **Bus** KSRTC/ Volvo from Mysuru (80km/2 hrs) is ₹80-300; fare from Bengaluru (250km/ 5-6hrs) is ₹550-600

bison, hundreds of deer, and other wild denizens of these forests.

ORIENTATION

The Mysuru-Ooty road leads to the entry point of Bandipur National Park. The Reserves headquarters and range office (Tel: 08229-236043) are located nearby. The new ticket counter, STPF Campus at Melukamanahalli village, near Anjaneyaswamy Temple, is located outside the forest, near the entry point of the Park. **Bandipur Safari Lodge**, run by Jungle Lodges (JLR) of Karnataka Tourism, is also located here. JLR alone is now licensed to operate jeep safaris. No private vehicles are allowed inside the reserve. **Mini-bus safaris operated**

by the Forest Department begin from the range office. Trekking is now permitted in Bandipur. The excellent **Interpretation Centre and Souvenir Shop** are bustling hubs.

Northwest of the Bandipur Safari Lodge rears up the highest peak of the Nilgiris in Bandipur; this is **Himavad Gopalaswamy Betta**, at whose summit lies the **Venugopalaswamy Temple** dedicated to Lord Krishna. The spectacular **Moyar Gorge** acts as the southern boundary between Mudumalai and Bandipur game parks. The park is watered by ten Moyar, Kabini, and Nugu rivers. Many resorts are located in and around Masinagudi town (see *Where to Stay and Eat on page 129*). Jeeps can be hired from Masinagudi (26km

Panoramic view of Bandipur landscape during a jeep safari



Courtesy BANDIPUR SAFARI LODGES

SHUTTERSTOCK



Mother and baby elephant in Bandipur, one of the major habitats for the animal

from Bandipur) for ₹2,500 for 2 hrs from the Forest Department's Eco-tourism Wing (Cell: 08300255046).

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

Jungle Safaris

Rides into the parks on especially laid-out dirt roads called 'game roads' offer excellent views of wildlife. At Bandipur, only **Jungle Lodges (JLR)** can conduct jeep safaris. Other resorts now have to route their jeep safaris through JLR. Keep your eyes peeled not just for the elephant, or the elusive tiger, but also for the sly leopard, the magnificent black velvet skinned, white socked gaur, the lazy sloth bear and the comic antics of

those chancy predators, the dholes (wild dogs) that roam the forests in packs like local Romeos but can be fearsome when they attack prey en masse from all sides. And there is the forest, magnificent on its own.

Safaris: Forest Department mini-bus safari fee ₹350 pp Timings 6.15am-9am (2 trips), 2.15pm-5pm (2 trips) Jeep safari fee ₹ 3,000 (6 pax) Timings 6.15am-8am, 8am-9.45am; 2.30pm-4.30pm, 4.30pm-6.30pm

NOTE Elephant safaris have been discontinued.

Moyar Gorge

It's totally worth the ride to this stunning gorge, which separates

Courtesy BANDIPUR SAFARI LODGES



Bandipur Safari Lodge, run by Jungle Lodges, is one of the best properties here

Bandipur from Mudumalai. From the Bandipur side, the Moyar Gorge or 'Mysore ditch', created by the turbulent Moyar river on the park's southern boundary, can only be reached by jeep safari or trekking.

Eco-tourism is another thing to explore at this reserve. For over the past three decades, Bandipur has been at the forefront of the eco-tourism movement in India. Extending over an area of 82 sq km, which is about 9.4% of the total area of the reserve, the eco-tourism activity is conducted extensively in the twin ranges of Bandipur (54 sq km) and GS Betta (28 sq km). In addition, the **eco-tourism area** in Kundukere range abuts the villages

of Mangala, Chikkayelachetti, and the areas that are home to some private tourist resorts, which get fully booked in season.

Year-round eco-tourism activities are on offer for visitors who are looking to combine a bit of recreation with a genuine attempt to be involved in the conservation of this spellbinding wildlife environment. It's a big hit with botanical enthusiasts, photographers and environment buffs.

Some of the resorts, such as **Wildflower Tusker Trails** (which started out as the highly popular Tusker Trails by a descendant of the Mysuru royals) also organise such thrilling activities.

Interpretation Centre and Souvenir Shop

Located at the entrance of the Bandipur Reserve, the interpretation centre provides information to visitors on the wildlife of this region. The souvenir shop stocks some interesting takeaways for friends and family, a little piece of Bandipur in your bag when you leave.

WHERE TO STAY AND EAT

As the Bandipur reserve gets hordes of visitors round the year, there is a wide range of stay options here suitable for all budgets. Staple snacks such as tea, biscuit, and *vadas* are quite easily available in several places in this area. For proper meals, the hotels you put up at are the most convenient options. The Forest Department has 19 rooms and three dorms in Bandipur (Tel: 08229-236043/51/60; Tariff: ₹1,600 for two), dorms (₹2,016-4,470 for the full dorm). For bookings, contact the office of the Conservator of Forests, Gundlupet, Chamarajanagar (*see Fast Facts on page 123*)

TIP At the time of booking any forest accommodation, it is mandatory to also pay the park entry, safari and guide fee etc.

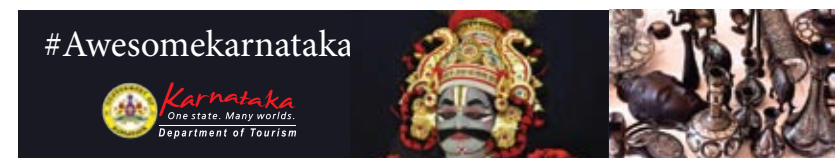
Bandipur Safari Lodge (Tel: 08229-233001; Tariff: ₹6,800-8,300

pp), run by Karnataka Tourism's Jungle Lodges, has well-furnished rooms; its tariff includes full board plus morning and evening safaris, forest entry fees and taxes per person per night. Amongst private hotels, there is the popular **Windflower Tusker Trails** (Tel: 08229-236055/66, Cell: 09901446666; Tariff: ₹15,930-16,990), near Mangala village. It has tastefully designed cottages and organises village visits and short treks. **MC Resort** (Tel: 233044/45; Tariff: ₹7,080-8,250, with meals) in Melukamanahalli village, adjacent to the park, is another option.

There are many more private resorts around Masinagudi in Tamil Nadu, a town located about 26km from Bandipur. Options here include **Jungle Hut** (Tel: 0423-2526240; Tariff: ₹6,490-8,566, +breakfast) and the **Monarch Safari Park** (Tel: 2526250/343; Tariff: ₹3,500-4,500), which has a restaurant. The **Bamboo Banks Farm** (Tel: 2526211; Tariff: ₹7,000, with meals) offers safaris and accepts credit cards. **Green Park Resort** (Tel: 252-6351/486; Tariff: ₹2,500-6,500), is another convenient option close to Bandipur.

For more, see Bandipur Accommodation Listings on pages 430-431. ■

Inputs from Soumya Prasad





Photographs by ANURAG MALLICK

A jeep safari in the forests of Kabini

KABINI

PRISON TURNED FREE RANGE

■ ANURAG MALLICK AND
PRIYA GANAPATHY

A historic area that served as an exclusive hunting reserve of the Maharajas of Mysuru, Kabini was the site of the legendary *kheddah* operations, where entire elephant herds would be stockaded into a ditch. Select ones were caught and trained for timber operations and the Mysore Dasara festival. The first attempt to capture elephants in this manner was made by Tipu Sultan's father Hyder Ali in 18th century. Despite using his army, the

Sultan of Mysuru failed to capture any wild elephants. A stone inscription records his disgust and warns about the futility of the task and his curse upon anyone who tries it in the future.

No further attempts were made until the first British *kheddah* operation by Colonel Pearson in 1867, which was also unsuccessful. Another officer, GP Sanderson from the Canal and Irrigation Department, made an attempt in 1873 and met a similar fate. However, his second attempt in 1874 at Kardihalli in the Kakanakote forest on the banks of

the Kabini river was successful. The unique feature of a Kakanakote *kheddah* was the river drive, first conceptualised by Sanderson in 1891 in honour of The Grand Duke of Russia's visit to Mysuru. The vast operation involved thousands of people who beat drums and drove the elephants across the Kabini river into the stockade. Special galleries were set up for distinguished guests and royalty to witness the drama.

Over the next century, 36 *kheddah* operations were held until it was finally banned in 1971. The Kabini river was dammed in 1974 for irrigation. Now, visitors congregate here for yet another spectacle.

After winter, the reservoir waters are released for irrigation. As the waters recede, dormant grass shoots begin to sprout, turning the tract into a giant grazing ground, attracting elephants in their hundreds, the largest such congregation in Asia. Increased protection has led to a spurt in tiger numbers, with 221 in the Bandipur-Nagarahole tract alone. Since Kabini is wedged between the two parks, the intersecting tiger territories result in good sightings.

Wildlife photographers flock to Kabini forest to shoot its legends like Mr Kabini or Bhogeswara Tusker, with ivories so long, they scrape the ground. The biggest leopard with the largest territory is the Water Tank Male or Torn Ear while the Backwater Female tigress gives great sightings as does the solitary black panther. Yet, in the quest for big mammals, it's easy to miss out on

other creatures. Besides packs of dhol, gaur, jackal and over 300 species of birds, one can spot fascinating arachnid species like the ornamental tree trunk spider, jumping spider, two-tailed spider, giant cross spider, giant wood spider and tent spider.

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

Wildlife Safaris

All safaris in Kabini start from the Gol Ghar, the river-facing gazebo at

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→ FAST FACTS



When to go All year round, but the forest and weather are at their best between October and March, with good animal sightings from February to May, when massive elephant congregations take place during peak summer. The Gundre jatre fair is held during Ugadi.

Tourist Offices

● Department of Tourism, Government of Karnataka  

No. 49, 2nd Floor, Khanija Bhavan, Race Course Road, Bengaluru
Cell: 09686633491, 07795516979

 karnatakaturism.org

● Jungle Lodges and Resorts Ltd.  
Ground Floor, West Entrance
Khanija Bhavan, Race Course Road
Bengaluru

Tel: 080-40554055

 junglelodges.com

STD code 080



Elephant; Crested Serpent Eagle; Kabini Gaur

the iconic Kabini River Lodge, run by JLR. The serene boat ride accesses parts of the lake not reachable by jeep for sighting wildlife such as mighty elephants and crocodiles. Wildlife safaris are carried out by boat on the reservoir or by jeep in the two tourism-heavy zones. The forested Zone A is significantly larger and covers part of Nagarahole's Antharasanthe wildlife range while on the other hand, the quaint lakeside Zone B covers DB Kuppe range, the preferred route in hot summer months. Unlike most other wildlife parks, Kabini does not shut down in monsoon, and the jeep and 16-seater and 20-seater safari vans and boats are equipped with a canopy, come rain or shine. There

are two drives a day of 3 hrs each, at 6.30 am and 3.30 pm (reporting time at your resort is 30 minutes prior). While the safari cost is billed into the JLR per person tariff, most other resorts have an all-meals package and charge for the boat or jeep safari separately (₹1,650 pp), including a transfer to/from JLR.

WHERE TO STAY AND EAT

Evolve Back Kuruba Safari Lodge (Bengaluru reservations Tel: 080-25127000, 46184444; Tariff ₹30,600-36,900 +meals & nature activities), located in Bheeramballi Village, was formerly known as Orange County Kabini. It offers a luxurious stay with Kuruba dances by a poolside campfire

and a Responsible Tourism Walk. **Kabini River Lodge** (Cell: 09449599754; Bengaluru reservations Tel: 080-40554055; Tariff ₹8,885-15,694, +meals, 1 boat safari, 1 jungle safari pp; dorm ₹5,095-6,501 +meals, 1 boat safari, 1 jungle safari pp) once served as the hunting lodge of the Mysuru royals and has been rated as one of the Top 5 Wildlife Resorts in the World by the British *Tatler Travel Guide*. **Water Woods** (Bengaluru reservations Tel: 080-46732010; Tariff ₹16,140-23,554 +meals), located in Karapura, is a lovely waterfront property on the banks of the reservoir. **Kaav Safari Lodge** (Kochi reservations Tel: 0484-2864800, Cell: 09995803861; Tariff ₹17,230-18,600 +meals) at Malalli Cross is a private six-room safari lodge with four rooms in a complex with a common living; and an upper deck facing the forest and two plush tents on stilts nearby. Overlooking the disused old forest department road, you can spot gaur and big cats right in your backyard.

The Serai Kabini (Cell: 09945602305; Bengaluru reservations Tel: 080-40012200, Cell: 09900063960; Tariff: ₹41,900-64,480 +meals for 2N; TE) at Karapura Village, Antarasante Hobli, was once tiger conservationist TGR 'Tiger' Ramesh's resort Cicada Kabini before it was acquired by Coffee Day and is

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→ GETTING THERE

Air Nearest airport: Mysuru Airport (70km/ 1½ hr) is connected only to Chennai International Airport by TruJet. However, Kempegowda International Airport in Bengaluru (250km/ 5 hrs) is well connected to all major Indian airports and several in Asia and Europe by all Indian domestic airlines and several international carriers. Taxi costs ₹9-18 per km

Rail Nearest railhead: Mysuru Junction (71km/ 1½ hr) is connected to Bengaluru, Delhi, Chennai, Mumbai, Guwahati and other cities. Taxi costs ₹2,000 (Non-AC) ₹2,700 (AC)

Road From Mysuru's Hand Post Circle, take the Mananthavady Road till Kabini Circle. About 5 km from Antarasante; enter the jungle road to Kabini River Lodge at Karapura. The resorts are 2km ahead. **Bus** Daily KSRTC bus services serve Kabini from the Central Bus Stand in Bengaluru

now run as The Serai. Kayaking, bicycle trails, bonfires and nature hikes are arranged on request. ■

For more, see *Kabini Accommodation Listings* on page 438

#Awesomekarnataka





Courtesy JUNGLE LODGES

The leopard is among the major carnivores at BR Hills Wildlife Sanctuary

BR HILLS WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

AT LORD RANGANATHA'S FEET

■ SUNAAD RAGHURAM

The Biligiri Rangana Betta or BR Hills Wildlife Sanctuary, also known as the Biligiri Ranganaswamy Temple Wildlife Sanctuary, was formed in June 1974 close to the BR Temple precincts. Originally spanning an area of 322 sq km, it was expanded in 1987, after which it covered 534 sq km. The strategic location of the sanctuary provides an

excellent bridge between the Western and Eastern Ghats, facilitating the exchange of the gene pools of their diverse flora and fauna.

This wildlife corridor witnesses some of the largest numbers of wild elephants and tigers east of the Western Ghats in the southern peninsular region. The forest is also home to gaur, dhole, giant flying squirrel, and the endangered chousingha (four-horned antelope).

In recent years, the sanctuary has been exposed to the ravages of quarrying along its fringe areas. Overgrazing is another threat that has to be handled effectively.

ORIENTATION

The two **entry points** to the sanctuary are **Yelandur** and **Chamarajanagar**, which are about 40km apart. The Chamarajanagar entry is about 40km from the sanctuary via the **K Gudi Camp**, while Yelandur is 18km from the sanctuary. The route is scenic from the Chamarajanagar side, with the road winding up the hill via **Vandarbal village** in the foothills. The forests are dense, the valleys deep, and they make for an enthralling sight. If you plan to halt at Chamarajanagar for the night, you need permission from the Forest Department (*see Fast Facts*). But if you are not staying back, make sure you are on your way out by 6pm sharp. The forest guards are pretty strict about the rule.

Apart from the tents put up by the **K Gudi Camp** run by Jungle Lodges, right next door is a forest resthouse and the Jungle Lodges office located in the hunting lodge of the erstwhile Mysuru royals.

Jeeps are available on hire at Chamarajanagar or Yelandur to travel to the sanctuary. Expect to pay ₹1,500 for a day trip from Chamarajanagar and about ₹800–1,000 from Yelandur.

♦ **Timings** Safari hours are from 6.30am–8am, 3.30pm–6pm **Cost** ₹450pp (10-seater vehicle)

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

This sanctuary is covered with thick jungles and a multitude of peaks rising and falling like the ebbs and tides in an ocean of greenery. Whether you choose to just soak in the goodness of nature or fold your hands in silent prayer at the temple, rest assured that a visit would rejuvenate your senses.

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→ FAST FACTS

When to go September to April is the best time to visit. The sanctuary, however, is open throughout the year
Tourist/ Forest Department offices

- Conservator of Forests 📍
BRT Tiger Reserve, Wildlife Division,
Sultan Sheriff Circle,
Chamarajanagar
Tel: 08226-222059
www.karnataka.gov.in
- Office of the Deputy Director 📍
Department of Tourism
2nd Floor, Room No. 17,
Deputy Commissioner Bhavan,
Chamarajanagar
Tel: 08226-226512
Cell: 09481815220 (TO), 09886070411 (DTC)
- KSTDC 📍
Hotel Mayura Bharachukki
Shivanasamudra, Kollegala Taluk,
Chamarajanagar
Cell: 08970650053
STD code 08226

Biligiri Rangaswamy Temple

The presiding deity of this temple is Lord Ranganatha, whose giant, 21-inch sandals are said to protect his feet as he wanders through these forests by night, keeping vigil. Said to be a few thousand years old, the temple is perched on a peak offering panoramic views of almost the entire region, and can be reached either on foot or vehicle. Behind the temple is a spine-chilling 1,000ft drop into the dense jungle. Iron railings, installed for safety in recent times, haven't

stopped the resident monkeys from performing their crazy acrobatics.

Dodda Sampige Mara

This is a mammoth champak (*Magnolia champaka*) tree deep inside the forest that is revered by locals. According to the Soliga tribals, sage Agastya planted it some 3,000 years ago. The stream flowing nearby to where the tree stands is a sight to behold. Approach is only by jeep, as the terrain certainly doesn't resemble your neighbourhood park!

Boodipadaga

Deep inside the sanctuary is a regal hunting lodge. Now slightly derelict, it was once a famous forest residence of the erstwhile Mysuru rulers. This is where elephants used to be trapped by the pit method, and also where the scourge of the jungle, sandalwood smuggler and brigand Veerappan, was incarcerated for a few weeks in 1986. Today, it is the Forest Department Inspection Bungalow. Sloth bears and wild elephants often lurk around the lodge. Not too many visitors have returned from this part of the jungle without seeing at least one of these two animals.

Ragikallu Madu

This is a unique natural formation not too far from Boodipadaga. The water from a stream forcefully gushes into a rocky depression (*madu*), creating a whorl, much like the movement of a stone grinder used to crush millet grains. *Ragi* means millet in Kannada and *kallu* means stone. Hence the name.



Muntjac deer at BR Hills

Trekking

The **Boodipadaga area**, like most parts of the BR Hills, offers the intrepid trekker enough mud for her boots. The place is ringed by hillocks and mounds clothed in lush jungles. Anna-Tamma Gudda, Sulare Gudda, Ittige Bare, Devara Betta, Jenkalbare, Malki Betta and Karadi Gadde are some of the spots that you can trek to. But not before you have the nod of the forest department and a tribal guide, without whom you are bound to lose your way.

Jungle Safari

Even if you are not fortunate enough to spot wildlife on the main road, the safari in the jungle that takes you on the Aane Hadu Road into the

environs of the **Basavananni Kere** area deep inside, should give you ample scope to explore the wildlife and spot animals. The journey through the jungle is bound to be full of surprises as you could find an animal standing right in the middle of the game road as you bank a curve or go up an incline. Sightings happen around K Gudi Camp itself if you are lucky. Once a panther was seen just behind the dining area at about three in the afternoon, perched on a tree. Another time, a sloth bear came hurtling down a slope near a log hut as alarm calls rent the air. The time was nine in the morning. Although it is generally safe to hang around, there is always the possibility of such surprises springing upon you.

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→ GETTING THERE

Air Nearest airport: Mysuru airport (100km/2-3 hrs) and Bengaluru airport (230km/5-6 hrs); Taxi from Mysuru/Bengaluru to BR Hills Sanctuary costs ₹7-12 per km

Rail Nearest railhead: Chamarajanagar (44km) is connected to Mysuru with a few trains. KSRTC bus from Chamarajanagar to BR Hills costs ₹30-40.

Road Take the Mysuru highway to reach BR Hills via Yelandur. It takes about 5-6 hrs from Bengaluru. **Bus** From Mysuru to Chamarajanagar (90km/2-3 hrs) KSRTC buses ply on these routes. Fare: KSRTC buses ₹75-80 till Chamarajanagar; from Chamarajanagar to BR Hills bus fare is ₹30, which is available only in the morning at 7.30am and 8.30am; taxi fare from Bengaluru (230km/5-6hrs) to BR Hills is ₹2,500-3,000

ALAMY IMAGES / INDIA PICTURE



Foresters carry out a tiger census

There is a pond within the Jungle Lodges campus that is frequented by wild elephants, especially during summer. A massive tusker is a particularly famous visitor, say the locals. There are two tame elephants in the camp, Kyateshwara and Jayalakshmi. It is Jayalakshmi on whose sturdy back you ride into the jungle. According to a recent survey, there are 17 tigers in this sanctuary. Carnivores also include the leopard, wild dog, lesser cats, and sloth bear. Amongst arboreal mammals, two species of primates have been found. Surveys in the forest have recorded 254 species of birds.

WHERE TO STAY AND EAT

Visitors have three options: a Jungle Lodges tented camp, and two forest resthouses inside the sanctuary.

K Gudi Wilderness Camp (Bengaluru reservations Tel: 080-40554055; Tariff ₹5,570-8,124pp +meals), the Jungle Lodges' luxury-tented accommodation is full of rustic stylishness. It has eight permanent furnished twin-bed tents with modern toilet facilities. Three furnished ethnic huts on stilts (log huts) with attached modern toilet facilities are also available. Quaint hurricane lamps light up the night, as there is no electricity here. The **Gol Ghar** at the camp offers buffet breakfast, lunch, and dinner along with coffee, tea and snacks.

The **Forest Rest House** (Tel: 222059; Tariff: ₹1,600 +entry charges) has two rooms and is run on solar power. Another FRH, located in K Gudi, has three rooms. The caretakers here can prepare your meals. Both FRHs can be booked through the office of the Conservator of Forests in Chamarajanagar (Tel: 08226-222059). You could also stay in Chamarajnaragar, where plenty of stay options are available.

For more, see BR Hills WLS Accommodation Listings on page 433. ■

#Awomekarnataka





PUNIT PARANJPE

Priest at a temple in rural Hassan

HASSAN

THE GODDESS SMILES

■ ANURAG MALICK AND
PRIYA GANAPATHY

Located between Bengaluru and Mangaluru, where the rolling plains gently slope into the Western Ghats of Sakleshpur to the west and Chikkamagaluru to the north, Hassan is blessed with pleasant climate all year round and has been called 'Poor man's Ooty'.

With decent hotels, mostly located on the arterial Bengaluru-Mangaluru (BM) Road, Hassan is an ideal getaway well positioned for interesting sights — a village-themed resort, the drowning church of

Shettihalli, a scenic dam, the twin temples of Mosale, and other lesser-known architectural gems of the Hoysala Empire.

In the heart of the city stands the temple of goddess Hassanamba. Locals believe that this smiling (*hassana*) goddess (*amba*) presides over the welfare of the city and also gives the place its name. According to the temple's *sthala purana*, the name Hassan is derived from *simhasanagiri* (the hill that resembles a throne), where Lord Shiva in the guise of a *kirata* (hunter) had engaged the great archer Arjuna in a duel, witnessed by the *saptamatrike*

or seven mother goddesses. A town came up around the temple and was called Simhasanapura, which over time got shortened to Hassan. While the temple is open all year round, the shrine of Hassanamba is opened to the public just once a year.

Besides being a base for the temples at Halebidu-Belur, Hassan lets one follow the Hoysala trail to the Chatteshvara Temple at Chatachattahalli; the Lakshmi Narasimha and Someshwara temples at Nuggihalli; the Chennakeshava and Someshwara temples at Haranahalli; the Trikuta Temple at Belavadi with shrines of Veeranarayana, Venugopala, and Yoga Narasimha; the Kattameswara Temple at Arsikere; the Lakshmi Narasimha Temple at Javagal; and the Vasantika Devi temple at Sosevur (now Angadi), where the foundation of the Hoysala Empire was laid.

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

Hassanamba Temple

The temple is dedicated to goddess Amba, a form of Shakti. Legend has it that Lord Shiva had fought Arjuna in his *kirata roop* before gifting him the weapon *pashupatastra*. Since the *saptamatrike* wished to see the birthmark on the valiant Pandava's back, Shiva allowed himself to be pinned down temporarily, for which he then cursed the goddesses and upturned the earth, sending them to their respective locations. The goddesses Lakshmi, Parvati, and Saraswati dwell on Simhasanagiri; Varahi, Indrani, and Chamundi reside on Devagiri; while Kenchamba is the presiding deity at Kenchamma Hoskote on Sakleshpur Road.


A natural stone image at the Hassanamba temple complex depicts Shiva in his hunter form while a small shrine to the left is dedicated to the goddesses. The inner sanctum opens only once a year for a period of 9, 11 or 15 days in October/November depending on the lunar calendar. Don't miss the unusual image of Ravaneshwara, a nine-headed form of Ravana playing the *veena* in an anteroom. It is said that to appease Lord Shiva, Ravana created a *veena* by chopping off one of his heads and using other organs of his body. His tenth head forms the instrument's tuning knob, the stomach forms the base, his spine forms the fret-board and the entrails form the strings. Like Arjuna, Ravana, too, was then gifted a divine weapon by Lord Shiva.

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→ FAST FACTS

When to go All year round. The Hoysala Festival is held in January

Tourist Offices

- Office of the Deputy Director 
Department of Tourism
Sumaka Yathri Nivas Building,
AVK College Road,
Near Old Bus Stop, Hassan
Tel: 08172-268862
Cell: 09880988825 (DTC)
STD code 08172



Entrance of the Hassan Hassanamba temple

Koravangala

Just 11km from Hassan, off the Arsikere highway, Koravangala is home to three Shiva temples built in Hoysala style that date back to the 12th century. The present name of the hamlet is a phonetic corruption of its older name Koramangala. Legend has it that the main shrine, the Bucheshwara Temple, was built in 1173 at the time of the *pattabhisheka* (coronation ceremony) of Ballala II by his *pradhan* (minister) Bhutanatha Raja, or Buchiraja for short, hence the name Bucheshwara. An inscription mentions the architect Bhutanatha Raja as a Brahmin officer in the family that served Narasimha I, Ballala II's father. There are two smaller shrines of Nakeshwara and Govindeshwara built by Buchiraja's brother in 1160.

WHERE TO EAT

Most of the city hotels have decent restaurants like **Shantala** in Hassan Ashhok, **Hoysala** in Southern Star, **Swaad** in Hotel Raama, and **Parijata** in Mallige Residency.

WHERE TO STAY

Hoysala Village Resort (Tel: 08172-256764; Bengaluru Tel: 080-22340166/ 88, Cell: 09591077400; Tariff: ₹13,500-19,000 + meals) located in Handinkere village, Belur Road, features crisscrossing flagstone pathways that lead to laterite and terracotta cottages with vernacular styling and garden-facing sitouts. Besides a bar, pool, multi-purpose conference hall, and facility for Ayurvedic massage, there's cycling through nearby villages.

Photographs by ANURAG MALLICK

Southern Star (Tel: 251816-17; Tariff: ₹3,000-5,000; TE) opposite Karur Vysya Bank, BM Highway, features 47 modern rooms with a business centre, travel desk, and massage on offer. The popular Hoysala restaurant here is known more for its North Indian dishes and has an attached bar. The hotel also organises excursions in and around Hassan with guides.

Hotel Hassan Ashhok (Tel: 268734-36; Cell: 08884454900; Tariff: ₹5,900-14,720 +breakfast) opposite the District Collector's Office and centrally located 1km from the railway station and ½km from the bus stand, is tucked away off the highway, overlooking a

garden and approachable by a driveway. It has 37 rooms, a bar, restaurant, coffee shop, swimming pool, Ayurvedic massage, shopping arcade and also offers car rentals.

Stay Simple Riverdale Resort (Cell: 07846011011; Tariff: ₹3,750 +breakfast & dinner) set in a 21-acre coconut plantation amid paddy fields adjacent to the Hemavathy river near Ramanathpur temple, offers 10 spacious rooms and cottages. Designed in stone with slanting roofs, the rooms overlook a tidy garden, with a multi-cuisine restaurant, swimming pool and recreational activities on offer.

Mallige Residency (Tel: 260332-33, Tariff: ₹2,100-2,650 +breakfast) is a modern hotel with the choice of standard, deluxe, executive rooms and suites; it also features Parijata, a popular pure veg restaurant.

For more, see Hassan Accommodation Listings on page 437

AROUNDS

Mosale (15km)

A short drive from Hassan is Mosala Hosahalli or Mosale with two stunning 13th-century Hoysala temples dedicated to Chennakeshava and Nageshwara. Locally called Awali-Jawali Devasthanana, or literally 'twin temples', they are built in Trikutachala style out of soapstone. Identical in design and workmanship, they stand a few feet apart and each temple has an elegant tower in front with a fine carved figure of Sala with the tiger, alluding to the mythical



The elegant Mosale twin temples

origin of the Hoysala dynasty. The temple ceilings are elaborately carved with geometrical patterns and there are richly carved deities on the temple walls. Built in Vishnuvardhana's era by noted sculptors Jakanachari and Dankanachari, the Chennakeshava Temple has a beautifully sculpted 6ft idol of Vishnu with a *prabhavali* (decorative arch) depicting Matsya, Kurma, Varaha and other incarnations of Lord Vishnu.

The Ranga Mantapa has a florid, lotus-shaped ceiling carved with figures of *ashta-dikpalakas* (guardians of the eight directions) astride on their *vahanas* (vehicles), while the carved canopy of the *Navaranga* hall has various floral designs. The adjoining Shiva Temple is dedicated to Nageshwara and has a beautifully sculpted Nandi idol in front and a prominent *linga* on a star-shaped

platform. The stone canopy depicts scenes of Kailash with exquisitely carved divinities outside the sanctum sanctorum.

Doddagaddavalli (20km)

Located on the route from Hassan to Belur, Doddagaddavalli was once a prominent town called Abhinava Kolhapura, where one of the most prosperous businessmen of the Hoysala kingdom, Kulhana Rahuta, resided with his wife Sahaja Devi. The devout couple sponsored a congregation of Lakshmi temples around 1114, built by sculptor Malloja Maaniyoja. From the point of chronology, this has been declared as the first-ever temple built in Hoysala style and is a landmark because of several firsts. It is the only instance where an idol of Mahalakshmi has been enshrined, where both the Vaishnava and Shaiva

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→ GETTING THERE

Air Nearest airport: Mysuru Airport (115km/ 2½ hrs), but Kempegowda International Airport, Bengaluru (219km/ 5 hrs) offers more connections. Taxis cost ₹9-18 per km

Rail Hassan Railway Station is well connected with major cities, including Bengaluru and Mysuru

Road From Bengaluru take NH-4 to Nelamangala and turn left onto NH-48, the Mangaluru Highway Via Kunigal, Yediyur and Channarayapatna to Hassan **Bus** KSRTC offers several services, including Rajahamsa Executive ₹257, Airavat Club Class ₹501, Karnataka Sarige ₹199 from Bengaluru



View of the Chitradurga Fort

ways of worship are present and is the only example of a *chatushkuta* or four sanctuaries within the same structure. Though the main temple complex is named after Mahalakshmi, four sanctuaries enshrine the idols of Mahalakshmi, Mahavishnu, Mahakali and Bhootanatha in the shape of a *linga*. Entering the enclosure through a columned mantapa, the ceiling displays a relief of Shiva in the form of Nataraja. The temple has a four-cornered *shikhara* with four small cells marking the cardinal points laid out around the central *navaranga*.

Shettihalli Rosary Church (21km)

Drive via Shankaranahalli past fields of sunflower and castor to the rural backwaters of Shettihalli to see its famous 'drowning church'. Built in 1860 in Gothic style by French

missionaries for British estate owners, the Holy Rosary Church served as the mother church of the area. It was submerged a few decades ago due to the flooding of the Gorur dam, 8km away. However, the solid ruins have withstood the ravages of several monsoon and seasonal floodwaters that submerged it. Cruciform in shape with a long nave and two wings, the church is a tribute to the excellent workmanship of the masons of those days. However, after many years of pressure from the water, the roof has caved in though part of the altar and the central nave remain. When the dam is full, only the tip of the spire is visible. Salvaging stained glass and other parts of the ancient shrine, a completely new church was built at Jyoti Nagar.

Gorur Dam (25km)

At the confluence of the Yagachi and Hemavathi rivers, Gorur Dam is a scenic reservoir created by the 146ft high dam stretching for 4,362m. Located on the Hassan-Arkalgud road, the dam is a hugely popular picnic spot and plans are afoot to transform it into a destination on the lines of the famous Brindavan Gardens.

Gorur village also has a lot of Hoysala shrines—Para-Vasudeva Temple at the town entrance; the Yoganarasimha Swamy temple built in 1586 on the banks of river Hemavathi; and smaller shrines of Trikuteshwara and Kailaseshwara. There are two inspection bungalows at Gorur Dam where one can stay after reservation from the Chief Engineer, Hemavathi Project.

Sakleshpur (41km)

This gorgeous hill station is situated near NH48 is part of the Malnad region and is filled with beautiful hilly slopes and plenty of coffee and spice plantations.

Manjarabad Fort (46km)

Built by Tipu Sultan in 1772, this unique fort displays the brilliance of Islamic architecture in India. One can even view the scenic beauty of the Arabian Sea from this fort.

Bisle Ghat (88km)

With pristine rainforest and winding roads, Bisle Ghat is a hidden gem that connects the temple town of Kukke Subramanya with the coffee estates of Sakleshpur.

Chitradurga (90km)

Chitradurga lies in the Vedavathi Valley, in central Karnataka, 198km northwest of Bengaluru. Chitradurga's fort was so impregnable that it acquired the moniker 'fort of stone'. But it's not just a magnificent example of military fortification — old temples, a palace complex, fine carvings and other remnants of a bygone era, all make it a time capsule for Karnataka's rich heritage.

Shravanabelagola (53km) (*see page 150*)

Chikkamagaluru (61km) (*see page 296*)

Where to Stay and Eat

KSTDC's **Hotel Mayura Durga** (Tel: 234342, Cell: 08970656600; Tariff ₹2,128-2,799) is 2km from the fort.

Naveen Regency (Tel: 08194-230052, Cell: 07406667669; Tariff ₹1,455-3,540) is on NH4 Bypass.

Hotel Aishwara Fort (Tel: 231823; Tariff: ₹850-1,700) is a short walk from the fort. ■

#Awesom Karnataka





SAIBAL DAS

Carvings at the Hoysaleswara Temple in Halebid

HALEBID-BELUR

DOUBLE TAKE

■ DHANWANTI NAYAK

Halebid-Belur go together like twin cities. Separated only by a short drive, both were home to the Hoysala Dynasty for three centuries (mid-11th to mid-14th century). They were founded by a Jain, Nripa Kama, whose kingdom was sandwiched between the Cholas and the Chalukyas.

The Halebid and Belur temples are cut from the soft stone called chloritic schist. It allowed for very fine detailing, evident in the intricately-carved temple walls. The tradition of ivory and sandalwood handwork is reflected in the sculptures of these temples. Of special interest are the engineering techniques used in 'assembling' the

temple, particularly the locking systems that used grid locks, interlocks and the pin and socket system; they were used for attaching separately carved panels onto the walls and ceilings.

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

Hoysaleswara Temple

The main attraction is the **Hoysaleswara Temple**, which actually comprises two temples joined by a single platform. The second temple is the **Shantaleswara Temple**. Together they took roughly 100 years to build and are still incomplete. This temple is set in a pristine lawn and the restoration work done on the temple gives one an impression of impeccability. The

highlight is the nature of carvings done on the walls, so intricate that they resemble carvings done on sandalwood rather than stone.

Halebid is in almost pristine condition even after almost a thousand years of living history. Visiting it is a pleasure, partly due to that fleeting sense of reconnaissance one experiences on seeing the Hoysaleswara Temple, a relic from almost forgotten history textbooks, and partly owing to jewellery-like sculpture of the temple.

The best part of Halebid is the finely executed carved sculptures in its temples. Along with Khajuraho and Konark, the temples here at Halebid have ornate carvings, precisely done. These are so numerous on the walls that they should form a noisy cluster with humans and animals speaking to each other — but they don't. The Hoysaleswara Temple, although incomplete, resembles a finely engraved casket. Some of the sculptures are actually hollow, rather than being simply carved onto the walls. So a stick passed into the ear of a figure can come out through the nose and so on.

Strict *Vaastu Shastra* has been followed to make the temple extremely comfortable even in hot weather. One wall, for instance, is completely solid to block out the afternoon sun, whereas the other has numerous perforations to allow air and light to enter without increasing the temperature inside. The resultant inner space is cool, dim and lovely.

The temple is star-shaped, like other prominent Hoysala architecture, and this allows a larger surface area on which to execute the carvings. Anyone who has overdosed on the tall *vimanas* and *gopurams* of other South Indian temples will find this one a relief — no need to crane your neck at an awkward angle to see the top. Further, all the truly marvellous sculpture is conveniently placed at more or less eye-view level, thanks to the elevated platform that surrounds the temple.

Never mind that the temple is actually incomplete — none of the guides tell you that an imposing *vimana* was part of the original design and was not executed at the

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→ FAST FACTS

When to go Ideal time to visit is between October and February

Tourist Offices

● Dept of Tourism, Govt of Karnataka 📍

Sumaka Yathri Nivas Building,
AVK College Road, Hassan
Tel: 08172-268862

Cell: 09880988825 (DTC)

● Dept of Tourism, Govt of Karnataka 📍

Khanija Bhavan, Race Course Road
Bengaluru

Tel: 080-22352828

🌐 karnatakaturism.org,
karnatakaholidays.net

STD code Hassan 08172

Bengaluru 080

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The breathtakingly beautiful Chenna Kesava Temple at Belur

time of construction. The structure is still pleasing in its proportions and the temple complex is large enough for you to pick a corner and remain undisturbed in your cogitations. When the sun gets too hot, go indoors and the latticework will allow just enough light and air to let you contemplate the pillared halls and marvel at the hollowed statues of yore while you cool off.

Chennakeshava Temple

Located in Belur, this temple complex has two entrances but one *gopuram*. This present brick tower was built in 1397, in place of the *mahadwara* that was burned down during the reign of the mercurial Sultan Mohammad bin Tughlak. The temple stands on a raised platform and looks like a carved casket made of wood polished to perfection. It has a flat roof

because its *vimana* was dismantled in 1879 to protect the sanctum sanctorum. Miniature shrines flank the steps to the temple. It is an *ekatachala* temple, with one shrine on a single platform. In the sanctum, the large image of Chennakeshava is profusely ornamented. The *navaranga* platform on which *devadasis* performed their dances is the largest platform of its kind.

♦ **Entry Free** **Timings** 7.30am-7.30pm **Photography** Free, but photography of the main deity strictly prohibited.

To the left, is the smaller, less elaborate shrine dedicated to Kappe Chennigaraya. At the back of the temple are three buildings — a large *mandapam*, the **Andal shrine**, and the **Soumyanayaki Temple** — built later, using materials from ruined Hoysala buildings elsewhere.

WHERE TO EAT

Try Belur's **Vishnu Regency** on KG Road for good North Indian and South Indian food. It has clean restrooms and ample parking space.

Hassan gives you an opportunity to try Malnad specialities such as *ragi* balls with both mutton and vegetarian stews. Indian food can be enjoyed at the two restaurants in Suvarna Regency. The **Belur Restaurant** at the Hoysala Village Resort is popular for its Indian and Continental meals. Hassan Ashhok's multi-cuisine **Shantala** restaurant is popular for its Continental and non-spicy Indian dishes. You could also try the **KSTDC Mayura** or some of the Udupi-style restaurants here.

Kamat's Restaurant, 35km away from Hassan, en route to Bengaluru, has good vegetarian fare.

WHERE TO STAY

In Halebid & Belur

The **KSTDC Mayura Velapuri** (Tel: 08177-222209; Tariff ₹1,500-3,500; TE) in Belur has 14 rooms.

The **KSTDC Mayura Shanthala** (Tel: 273224; Tariff: ₹999-1,900) in Halebid has five rooms and a restaurant. **Hotel Vishnu Regency** (Tel: 223011, Tariff: ₹800-1,200) on Kempegowda Road has 20 rooms.

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→ GETTING THERE

Air Nearest airport: Mangaluru (Belur is 127km/ 3.5 hrs), connected by daily flights to Bengaluru, Chennai and Mumbai. Taxis charge ₹9-20 per km

Rail Nearest railhead: Hassan (Belur is 36km/ 30 mins), connected to Bengaluru and Mysuru. Taxis charge ₹9-20 per km

Road From Bengaluru, it is a smooth drive till Hassan (4.5 hrs) on national highways, and another 40-45 mins to Belur/ Halebid on state roads. Taxi from Bengaluru costs ₹9-20 per km **Bus** Regular deluxe and standard buses ply between Bengaluru and Hassan. The Hassan-Belur bus leaves every 15 mins *See Route Planner on page 68*

In Hassan

For a heritage experience, there is the **Hoysala Village Resort** (Tel: 08172-256764; Tariff: ₹13,500-19,000 +meals). **Hotel Hassan Ashhok** (Tel: 268731-35; Tariff: ₹5,900-14,720 +breakfast) is an old favourite on the Bengaluru-Mangaluru Road. **Suvarna Regency** (Tel: 264279; Tariff: ₹1,176-2,420) is also on the same road.

For more, see Halebid-Belur Accommodation Listings on page 436 ■

#Awesomekarnataka





SHRAVANABELAGOLA

DHAVALA SAROVARA — SAINT OF THE SILVER LAKE

■ VIJAY NAMBIAN

Driving towards Shraavanabelagola, even 10km away a man-like shape becomes apparent, brooding over the flat landscape from atop the only hill on the horizon. From outside the town the gigantic bust is clearly visible, but within the town he is masked by his hill and his temple. This gentle colossus, Bahubali or Gomateshwara, has been gazing out upon the world for just over a thousand years.

Yet, even the ancient Bahubali is among the younger permanent

residents of Shraavanabelagola. The city's history reaches back to the earliest days of an idea of India.

The first Indian emperor, Chandragupta Maurya, made his retreat here after relinquishing his empire to his son and undertook a fast unto death in accordance with the Jain tradition. That was over 2,300 years ago, and even Chandragupta was not the first Jain to seek refuge here.

The Jain teaching is more a way of life than a religion. Though it admits the whole Hindu pantheon, it adores the divine in humanity. Yet, Jain art abounds in classical

Hilltop view of Shraavanabelagola

depictions of male and female deities. The key to this apparent paradox is that humans need a figure to meditate upon to realise the best in themselves.

And surely they see it in Gomateshwara, a highly revered figure among the Jains. Seekers of trivia will appreciate the fact that at over 17m, his is said to be the tallest statue carved from a single rock in Asia; some say it is the tallest monolithic statue in the world.

And seekers of peace will surely derive it from Gomateshwara's monolithic, steadfast patience and the calm smile on his lips, the smile of one who has conquered himself and thus the world.

LEGENDS AND MYTHOLOGY

An inscription of about 1180 CE at Shraavanabelagola tells the story of Bahubali. Gommata or Bahubali was a son of Adinatha, the first Tirthankara. His brother Bharata, who ruled at Ayodhya, challenged his brothers to fight for the kingdom. Bahubali defeated Bharata but returned the kingdom to him. He then stood for a whole year in the Yogic pose (Pratima Yoga), which the

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→ FAST FACTS

When to go October-March are the most temperate months

Tourist offices



● Office of the Deputy Director  

Department of Tourism
Sumaka Yathri Nivas Building,
AVK Coleage Road,
Near Old Bus Stop, Hassan

Tel: 08172-268862

Cell: 09880988825 (DTC)

STD code 08172

● Hotel Mayura Velapuri  
Temple Road, State Highway 110,
Belur, Hassan

Tel: 08177-222209

Cell: 08970650026

STD code 08177

● Hotel Mayura Shantala  
Opp Hoysaleshwara Temple,
Halebid, Hassan
Tel: 08177-273224 Cell: 08970654600

STD code 08177

statue also holds. But he could not attain peace because he was standing on his brother's land. Bharata, understanding this, gave him back the kingdom, upon which he attained enlightenment.

Local inscriptions and histories say that Bhadrabahu, a Jain *acharya* and descendant of Mahavira, predicted a famine in the north and moved from Ujjain to Shravanabelagola with 12,000 disciples. He was followed here by Chandragupta Maurya, who attended to the *acharya* in his last days and thereafter attained *samadhi* himself.

ORIENTATION

Shravanabelagola is centred around the *belakola* (white tank) that gives

The massive Gomateshwara statue



SAIBAL DAS

it its name. Shravana derives from the Sanskrit word *sramana*, meaning ascetic, and is the common appellation of Jain monks. The tank is about 150m square and best seen during the climb. It is easy to walk around the town. The stiffest challenge is the climb up the hills: over 650 steps to the top of **Vindhyagiri Hill** (to the south) and about half that to **Chandragiri Hill** (to the north). Palanquins (*dolis*) are available for the former.

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

The smaller hill, Chandragiri, has the older and richer monuments. A little lower down the hill, within an old stone wall, are 16 monuments, 13 of which are temples of Jain Tirthankaras. The oldest date to the 8th century and the oldest inscriptions to at least the 6th century. The larger hill, Vindhyagiri, has the statue of Bahubali at its summit with a temple around him and several smaller temples below. The statue is supposed to have been consecrated in 983CE. The town between these hills has many Jain temples and monasteries.

It's best to rise early, in whatever season, and make the longer climb up the rock-cut steps of Vindhyagiri while the air is fresh.

Vindhyagiri

An elegant three-celled temple, 572 steps up, stands on a high terrace buttressed by slabs of rock. This is the Odegala Basadi and has images of the Tirthankaras Adinatha,

Photographs by SHUTTERSTOCK



Priests offer worship at the feet of the gigantic Gomateshwara statue

Neminatha, and Santinatha. It is another 100-odd steps to the top of the hill and there are smaller shrines and many structures along the path. Notable amongst them is the figure of Gullakayajji, an old woman said to be an incarnation of goddess Padmavati, who inspired the sculpting of Gomateshwara. She cleaned the statue with a local fruit, a *gulla-kayi*, when the scholar Chavundaraya could not.

The main doorway to the fort/temple at the top is called Akhandabagilu because it was carved out of a single stone. Flanking the door are figures of Bahubali and his brother Bharata. It is difficult to know what to call the main structure. The Jain way does not give prominence to

worship of gods, so most Jain buildings are not really temples. The massive rock-cut architecture and the crenellated walls make it seem more of a fortress, yet there is no evidence that it was used as such. Perhaps it is best to use the Jain word 'basadi' or 'basti', which means simply abode.

Up more steps and round more turns, you come at last to the quadrangle where Gomateshwara stands. He is sculpted with all the *mahapurusha lakshana* (signs of a great man) such as long earlobes, broad shoulders and long arms. The expression of peace on his face is worth travelling a long way to see.

Chavundaraya was a scholar and writer as well as minister of the Ganga king Rachamalla. Jain legend



→ GETTING THERE

Air Nearest airport: Bengaluru (157km/ 3½ hrs), well connected by all major airlines from all metros. Taxi to Shravanabelagola costs ₹3,000-4,000 (approx for return)

Rail Shravanabelagola is connected to Bengaluru, Mangaluru, Sholapur, Mysuru, and Hassan by trains like Gomteshwara Express, Bengaluru-Kannur Express, Hassan-Solapur Express etc. Rickshaw fare from railway station to main town (1km) is ₹10-50 and bus fare is ₹10

Road From Bengaluru, follow NH4 (Tumkur Road) north past Yeshwantpur to Nelamangala. Stay below the flyover at the Nelamangala intersection to get onto NH48 (Mangaluru Highway). From here, it's a smooth drive along NH48 past Kunigal till Hirisave, short of Channarayapatna. At the centre of Hirisave, turn left to catch State Highway 8 (Chettali Road) to Shravanabelagola. From Mysuru, drive to Srirangapatna and catch State Highway 7 (Arsikere Road) to Krishnarajpet. A country road leads north from Krishnarajpet to Shravanabelagola but is good (or bad) in patches. KSRTC buses ply from Bengaluru and Mangaluru. If you stay in Hassan, a day-trip to Shravanabelagola by taxi will cost ₹2,000-2,500. **Bus** No direct KSRTC buses to Shravanabelagola. Private buses ply regularly. Fare from Bengaluru (140km/2-3 hr) to Shravanabelagola is ₹150-500

says that when his mother was told the story of Bahubali, she took a vow not to eat or drink until she had seen his famous image at Paudanapura (said to be near Purushapura or present-day Peshawar). Chavundaraya set out with her on the long journey but near the present site, goddess Padmavati appeared to him in a dream. She said the journey was impossible, but that Bahubali would appear at Vindhyagiri.

Next morning, Chavundaraya ascended Chandragiri and shot an arrow towards the bigger hill, where it hit a rock. He had the statue carved out of this monolith. It is conceived as the main figure in an imaginary temple, and set against the sky, it is the epitome of the Digambara ('sky-clad') Jain ideal. The actual sculptor is unknown.

In the corridor around the quadrangle are some 30 marvellously carved figures of the Tirthankaras.

♦ **Timings** All day

♦ **Related info** There is a Navakalasha Puja to Gommateshwara every Sunday at 8am. Footwear must be left at the bottom of the hill (at Chandragiri, too); the charge for safekeeping is nominal. There are clean toilets at the foot of Vindhyagiri. The **Mahamastakabhisheka** or ritual anointing of Gomateshwara is a grand event that takes place once in 12 years; the last one was in February 2018. All pilgrims may climb up the scaffolding for a rare top-down look at the statue; only Jains are allowed to perform *abhisheka*. The next Maha-



Chandragiri hill, where Acharya Bhadrabahu and Chandragupta Maurya lived

mastakabhisheka is due in 2030. The **Tourist Information Centre** (Tel: 08176-257131) of the Shravanabelagola Digambara Jain Matt Institution Managing Committee (SDJMIMC) at the foot of Vindhyagiri is very good with info and advice. The **Karnataka Tourism Office** next door is also quite helpful.

Chandragiri

To the historically minded, Chandragiri is much more interesting than the larger hill. Known as Katavapra (which connotes a fortification) or Kalvappu from ancient times, it gained sanctity from the visit of Acharya Bhadrabahu. His cave — where the slanting mass of rock above almost presses on the beholder's eyes — and that of Chandragupta, higher up, are remini-

scent of an age when kings and holy men lived only for their duty and their dharma.

There are 576 inscriptions on the rocks — the most found on a single site in India. They date from the 6th to the 19th centuries and speak of a dozen dynasties, including the Gangas, Rashtrakutas, Chalukyas, Hoysalas, Vijayanagara kings, and Wodeyars. Notable are the signature of Chavundaraya and the title 'Kaviratna' denoting the Kannada poet Ranna. Inside the wall below (perhaps the 'vapra' of the old name) is a wealth of architecture. Most *basadis* are in the southern *vimana* style but betray half a dozen different influences. As there are guides on the spot, and many explanatory booklets are available, only the more curious and beautiful details are mentioned here.

AHTUSHI DESHPANDE



These elephants at a temple can only be the work of master craftsmen

The **Kattale basadi** (dark temple) is the largest and most elaborate but also the poorest lit. It has a passage around the sanctum, but the tower overhead is now missing. The 1.8m figure of Adinatha is a fine piece of Hoysala art. The annexe to this temple, the **Chandragupta basadi**, dates to the earliest Gangas and is probably the oldest *basadi* here. Tradition has it that this was built by Chandragupta, and though it is at least a millennium later, it is possibly built on the site of his structure. It's remarkable for its two delicate, filigreed screens of soapstone. These bear minutely carved scenes from the story of Bhadrabahu's dream and Chandragupta's abdication, and their end in Shravanabelagola.

The **Chavundaraya basadi**, one of the finest, is a contemporary of the Bahubali statue on the opposite hill. The friezes and motifs are worth

studying, but the *basadi* is notable for a flight of stone steps within the building, leading to a second storey with a second shrine chamber, said to be built by Chavundaraya's son. Many of the *basadis* do not now hold their original deities. Some figures have been shifted here from other temples, or carved long after the *basadi* was made.

The free-standing **Kuge Brahmadeva Pillar** perhaps dates back to 974. It has a seated figure of Brahmadeva on top and eight elephants supporting the pedestal, of which five remain. On the opposite side of the enclosure is an unfinished statue half-sunk in the ground. This is said to be an image of Bahubali's brother Bharata, though the guide said it was a working model for the Bahubali statue. However, its inscription dates it to around the year 900.

WHILE IN SHRAVANABELAGOLA

A good long early morning walk among the fields is recommended. In the town, the **Jain Math** or monastery, where the *acharya* resides, has some interesting wall paintings from the 18th century. The temples are of the Hoysala period, from the 12th century onwards. The **Bhandari basadi** and the **Akkana basadi** are pleasing, finished temples. The **Kalamma Temple** has a seated four-handed image of Kali.

TIP Bahubali and Shravanabelagola are sacred to the Digambara Jain sect and it is not unusual to see 'sky-clad' monks in town and on Vindhyagiri. You will be wise to accept their customs if you want to blend in

WHERE TO STAY AND EAT

In Shravanabelagola, the **SDJMIMC** (Tel: 08176-257258, Cell: 07892471068) provides basic accommodation for visitors. It operates 22 **guesthouses** and two **dharamshalas** on Channarayapatna Road. These have rooms with two, three, four, five, and six beds, plus unfurnished halls. Up to 200 people can be housed in the rooms, and 300 people in the halls. In these guesthouses, the rates are ₹200 for a two-bed, ₹310 for a three-bed, and

₹900 for a five-bed room. Hall rate is ₹650 (25 pax) and ₹850 (40 pax). These rooms have attached baths (Indian toilets) and geysers. Write to the General Manager, Accommodation Section, SDJMIMC, Shravanabelagola, Hassan District-573135. Jains may also write to the Secretary (Tel: 257131), SDJMIMC (address as above). There is accommodation at Vindhyagiri itself, and Jain food is available.

Hotel Raghu (Tel: 257238; Tariff: ₹600-1,000), facing the tank in the centre of town, is a fairly simple place with a basic restaurant. Besides these, the many comfortable hotels in Hassan town (see page 437, 50km away, are a good base for extended visits to Shravanabelagola.

Shravanabelagola is strictly vegetarian. **Hotel Raghu** is a reasonable place for refreshments, with tiffin and thalis. There is a **Jain Dosa Palace** on the northern end of the tank, with much the same rates. Jain food is available at the SDJMIMC-run temple hostel.

For details, see *Shravanabelagola Accommodation Listings on page 444*

AROUNDS

Belur (see page 146)

Halebid (see page 146) ■

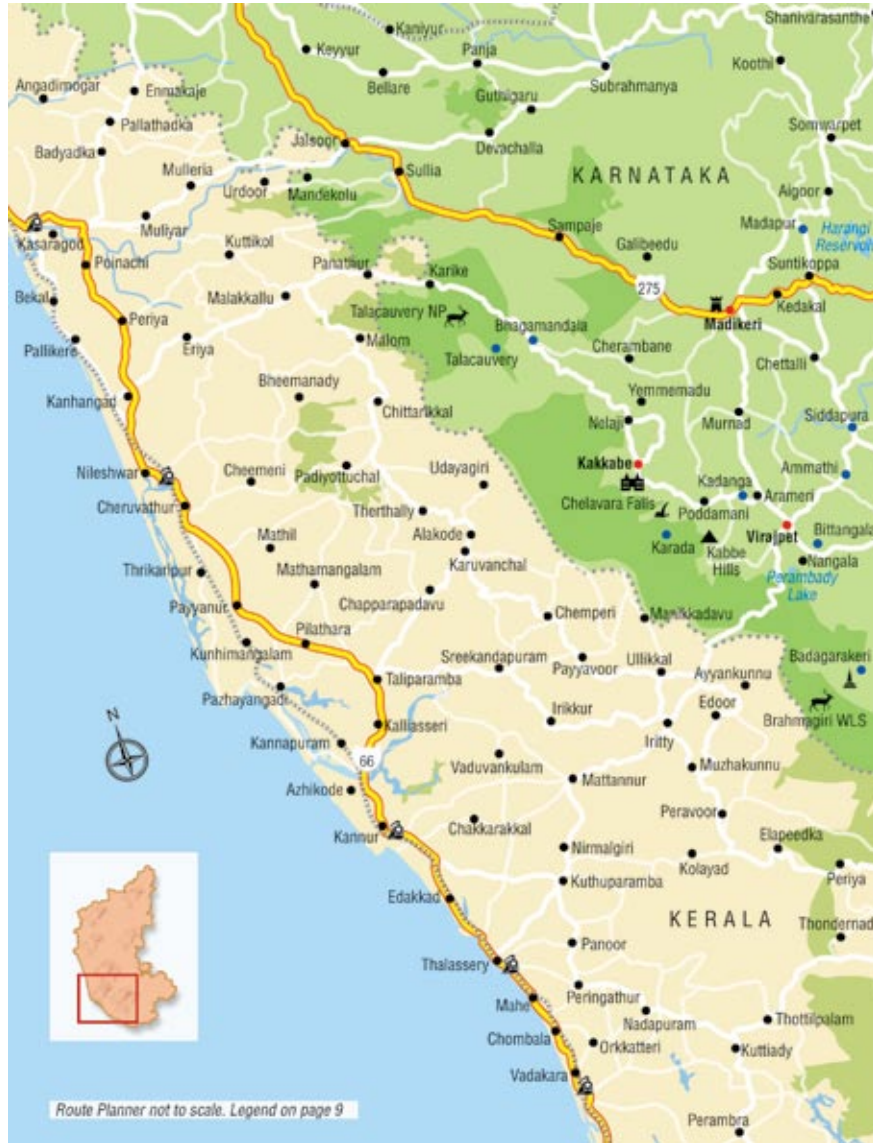
#Awesom Karnataka



Kodagu Region

The compelling richness of fragrant
coffee plantations, colonial nuances and
warm hospitality





Route Planner not to scale. Legend on page 9





The Madikeri Fort, built in the 17th century by Muddu Raja, was expanded later

MADIKERI

COFFEE COUNTRY

■ SID KAPADIA

Coffee is a seemingly magical elixir, with its bewitching aroma and heady kick of caffeine, that recharges people the world over. While most Indians may prefer the lure of chai instead, there are many of us who prefer a good old 'cup of joe'. If you play for the coffee team, then the Kodagu district of Karnataka (or Coorg) is its home

ground. One of the biggest coffee hubs in India, this hill district is spread across 4,102 sq km of the Western Ghats. Besides large swathes of coffee and spice plantations, Kodagu is home to dense forests and experiences heavy rainfall. Its proximity to Bengaluru makes it the perfect getaway for urban dwellers.

Though it is widely believed that the Kodagu region has been inhabited since the 2nd century, it

is from the 9th century that the region's history is clearer. Some of South India's most celebrated empires of the time ruled over this region. The list includes the likes of the Chola Dynasty, the Gangas, Chandalvas, and the Pandya, Kadamba, and Hoysala empires.

The Haleri kingdom reigned over Kodagu for more than 200 years from the 16th to 18th centuries, before it passed into the hands of general-turned-ruler Hyder Ali and his son Tipu Sultan. The British occupied the region from the early 1800s until Independence.

There is a lot to see in the beautiful Kodagu district — from cultural and historical sites such as old forts and foreign settlements and places wrapped in the embrace of nature to modern resorts and quaint cafés. For the adventure buff, there is everything from trekking to whitewater rafting and angling.

Kodagu has a little bit of everything: history, adventure, natural beauty, and, of course, those legendary coffee plantations.

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

Madikeri Fort

In the heart of Madikeri town lies the famous Madikeri Fort. When it was first commissioned by Muddu Raja of the Haleri kingdom, the fort and the palace inside the complex were simple mud structures. Tipu Sultan occupied it for a brief period in the late 17th century and re-built it with stone. He was eventually overthrown by Haleri emperor Dodda

Veerarajendra in 1790, who added his own touches to the complex, putting in the two life-sized masonry elephants, and a stone turtle on the palace grounds — artefacts that are still standing today.

The British, who allied with Veerarajendra in his battle against Tipu Sultan, took over the fort in 1834. The Church of St. Mark's inside the complex is a remnant of this rule, as are the clock tower and portico. The church also has a **museum** full of artefacts from the region, particularly from the British era. The museum also has a segment dedicated to hometown hero, Field Marshal KM Cariappa.

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→ FAST FACTS

When to go Ideal time to visit is between October and May

Forest Office/ Tourist Office

● Office of the Assistant Director
Department of Tourism

Stuart Hill, Madikeri, Kodagu



Tel: 08272-228580 (AD Office)

Cell: 09448004466 (TO)

Cell: 09844535509, 08073829204
(DTC)

STD code 08272

● KSTDC Information Office

Hotel Mayura Valley View  

Near Raja's Seat, Stuart Hill,

Madikeri, Kodagu

Cell: 08970650028

STD code 08272

Omkareshwara Temple

From afar, you might mistake this magnificent 18th century temple for a *dargah* for its bright orange and gold paint job. Commissioned by king Lingarajendra II of the Haleri dynasty, the temple was dedicated to Lord Shiva. Legend has it that this temple was built as a form of atonement; the story goes that a Brahmin was caught in the political crosshairs of the monarch, and because his death was unjust, his spirit lingered, giving the king nightmares. The king's courtiers then advised him to build this temple in order to make peace with the Brahmin's spirit, and supposedly, the idea worked. After building the Omkareshwara Temple, the king wasn't plagued by those nightmares

any more. Whether or not the legend is based on any truth, the temple itself is quite gorgeous and definitely worth a visit.

Raja's Seat

Also known as the 'Seat of the King', this spot in Madikeri is a perfect vantage point to watch the golden sun setting over the valleys around Kodagu. Clearly, the former monarchs of the Kodagu district thought so, too, because this spot has long been a place of relaxation for the region's royalty, and there's even an old pavilion here from where they used to enjoy the view. Today, the spot has a sprawling garden, complete with a musical fountain, and even has a little toy train for children.

◆ Entry fee ₹10

The Omkareshwara Temple is said to have been built to appease a Brahmin's spirit



ANURAG MALLICK

ANURAG MALLICK



Golden Buddhas at the Bylakuppe Tibetan Settlement, spread over 3,000 acres

Gaddige

The Raja's Tombs, or the tombs of the sleeping kings, are the final resting place of king Dodda Virarajendra, his wife Mahadevamma on one side, and flanked by a tomb for Lingaraja (his brother) on the other side. Though the tombs are built in the Indo-Saracenic style of architecture, with a dome in the centre and turrets on the four corners of the structure, since the kings were all Hindu, there are carvings of Lord Shiva and Nandi on the tombs.

Bylakuppe Tibetan Settlement

A Tibetan settlement spread across 3,000 acres of land, Bylakuppe was established in 1961 by exiled Tibetans fleeing from Chinese rule. It is one of the largest Tibetan colonies in India,

and is home to the Namdroling Monastery and the famous Golden Temple. Over 3,000 Buddhist monks live in the monastery, which was established in 1963, and today has a high school, institutes, a research centre, a nunnery and more. The monastery is also amongst the few places in India where Losar or the Tibetan New Year is celebrated in February or March. During this period, decorations are put up, processions are held, and the compound is even treated to traditional Lama dances. The massive golden Buddha statues draw many a tourist to the settlement.

Cauvery Nisargadhama

A small island in the Cauvery river, Nisargadhama can be accessed via a

hanging bridge. The island is a great place to get away from the chaos of busy Madikeri and enjoy a relaxing boat ride. With sandalwood trees and bamboo groves all around, taking a walk here is an immensely enjoyable experience. The island also has enclosures that house spotted deer and rabbits. There is also an assortment of adventure courses to keep children occupied. The island has a special spot where the fences surrounding the island part to allow you to venture into the Kaveri River. The place is peaceful (when not too crowded, which it usually is on weekends and holidays) and a great spot to relax. You can even choose to live in treehouses and bamboo cottages run by the state's forest department if you wish.

◆ **Entry fee** Adult ₹10; Child ₹5

Dubare Elephant Camp



SHUTTERSTOCK

Dubare Elephant Camp

If you are fascinated by pachyderms, Dubare is the place to go to. Run by the forest department, the Elephant Camp is home to a huge herd, and trained naturalists give you an insight about these gentle giants. You can not only watch the elephants in their natural habitat but also get up close and interact with them; elephant rides are available. These are all elephants that have been retired from logging operations and a visit to this camp is an extremely informative and enjoyable one.

Coffee plantation visits

With Kodagu's strong coffee credentials, it's not surprising that plantation walks, visits and stays are a part of the tourist setup. You can explore coffee plantations, see what the plants look like, and depending upon the time of the year, even witness the beautifully red cherry-like coffee plant in bloom, or witness the process of air-drying the seeds extracted from the plants. Visiting a plantation is an important addition to any to-do list if you are a coffee nut and would like to understand how that delicious brew goes from seed to plant to bean and eventually rests in a jar on your kitchen mantle as coffee powder.

WHERE TO STAY AND EAT

In Madikeri, **Coorg International** (Tel: 08272-228071-72, 229390; Tariff: ₹4,800-11,500 +breakfast; TE), Karnataka Tourism's **Mayura Valley View** (Tel: 228387, 298387; Tariff:

SHUTTERSTOCK



Pristine beauty of the Cauvery Nisargadhama forested island

₹3,068-6,136) and **Hill Town Hotel** (Tel: 223801) offer 50 rooms, while another property nearby, **The Highton Hotel**, has 31 rooms. You need to call ahead for rates. **Club Mahindra Kodagu Valley** (Tel: 221114; Tariff: ₹12,000-20,000), located on Galibeedu Road, offers adventure sports, and has a pool, spa and library. **The Last Resort** (Cell: 09880742726; Tariff: ₹2,500pp, with meals), in Hosapatna, is a swanky private cottage with four cosy rooms.

The Forest Department has a **guest house** (Tariff: ₹400-600) with two rooms at Nanjarayapatna Post near Valnoor. **The Tamara Coorg** (Bengaluru Tel: 080-71077700; Tariff: ₹14,000-18,000 +breakfast; TE), in Kabbinakad Estate, is a luxury stay, offering

serene and tranquil surroundings. **Gubbimane Homestay** (Cell: 07760795415; Tariff: ₹1,300pp +all meals) also in Kabbinakad, serves vegetarian meals. **Amanvana Luxury Spa Resort** (Tel: 08276-279353-55, Cell: 09480696070/ 71; Tariff: ₹13,325-14,988 +breakfast, activities), **Kannika International** (Tel: 274728, 273318; Tariff: ₹1,998-2,499 +breakfast), and **Parumpara Resort & Spa** (Cell: 09901308444; Tariff: ₹5,600-10,500, full dorm: ₹11,500 +two meals; TE) are good options in Kushalnagar.

Madikeri has superb eco-farm and plantation stays as well. Located 2.5km from Madikeri, **Shanti Estate Bungalow** (Tel: 223690, Cell: 09845505200; Tariff: ₹500-1,000pp) is spread over acres of coffee estate. **Golden Mist Plantation & Resorts**

(Tel: 265629, Cell: 09448903670, 09663923679; Tariff: ₹3,000pp, with meals), and **Rainforest Retreat** (Tel: 265638, Cell 09481501623; Tariff: Cottages ₹3,000-4,000, tents ₹2,000 +breakfast) are located in Galibeedu. Nestled in leafy environs, **Hillyside Estate** (Tel:08276-262666, Bengaluru reservations Tel: 080-41237561, Cell: 09880031470; Tariff: ₹1,500) is a good choice.

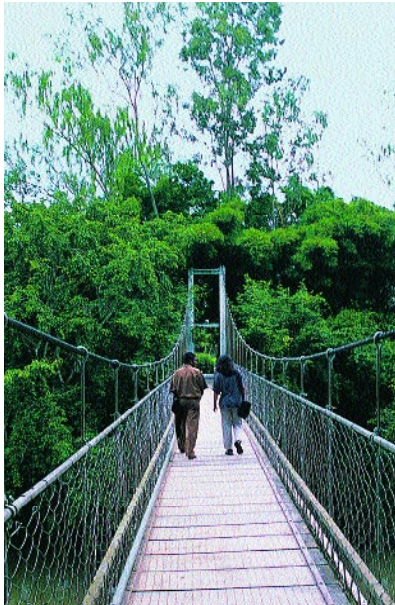
For more, see *Coorg Accommodation Listings on page 441*.

AROUNDS

Madapur (21km)

A 90-minute drive from Kushalnagar, a market place bustling with activity

The lush greens of Siddapur



PUNIT PARANJPE

and monks, on a winding hill road will take you to Madapur. The road to Madapur from Bengaluru, in fact, opens up on a typical countryside landscape — palm trees, paddy fields and a scattering of villages. But once you reach the tiny hamlet Madapur, it will bewitch you with its unique rustic charm. Whether it's a trek to Makkala Gudi Betta or the 'Kodaikanal of Kodagu' to enjoy the backwaters of Harangi reservoir or a visit to Mallalli Falls, this is a place where you can get in tune with nature and let the Madapur river wash your troubles away.

Check into any of the two beautiful homestays. Run by the owners of a coffee plantation, **Bel Home** is a beautiful estate with a great view. The knowledgeable owners not only offer their valuable insights into this gorgeous slice of Kodagu, they also spoil your taste buds with delicious Coorgi home-cooked food. **Coorg River Valley Homestay** is another excellent option where you can relax by the riverbank and enjoy the chirping of birds and savour the delights of living in the lovely independent cottages. Spacious bedrooms, a swimming pool, and plenty of fresh air and open spaces will ensure your utmost comfort.

Siddapur (28km)

Before the British colonialists transformed Siddapur's lush forest cover into coffee estates, it used to be called Siddhapura. The drive to this town is scenic and 8km away is Ammathi, a place worth visiting.

ANURAG MALLICK



Bhagamandala, with its three temples, is at the confluence of three rivers

Ammathi

The annual **Family Hockey Festival** here was intended to integrate far-flung Kodava families. The plan worked as relatives made it a point to visit Coorg during the month-long fest that has become the Woodstock of Sports.

Homestays offering a variety of activities and Coorgi food dot the area. Do make bookings for your stay well in advance.

Evolve Back Resort (Tel: 08274-252481-84; Tariff: ₹33,000-70,000 +meals, activities) offers serene views, a plethora of activities and a choice of three restaurants.

Alath-Cad Estate (Tel: 252589, 252190; Tariff: ₹2,500-4,000) is in Ammathi. Their home-cooked buffet

is an education in Kodava cuisine. Bonfires can also be arranged.

Coorg Golf Links (Tel: 298009; Tariff: Non-members ₹3,000, members ₹1,500) also has a beautiful cottage, overlooking the golf course.

Sand Banks (Cell: 09448588150; Tariff: ₹3,500-4,000) has cottages and a thatched hut that serves as a charming dining area.

Bhagamandala (35km)

This is a temple town at the confluence of the Cauvery with the Kannike and the invisible Sujyothi rivers. Three temples are dedicated to Bhagamandaleswara, Subrahmanya, and Vishnu. These temples are lit up by oil lamps during a festival in October/November. A dip in the river

SRIKANTH KOLARI



Tata Coffee's Woshully Estate Bungalow, Polibetta

at Bhagamandala is a *papasnana*; it is said to wash away your sins. Another site worth a visit is the **Bhagamandala** temple. The Kodava king Dodda Veerarajendra reconstructed this 200 years ago. It has carved ceilings and pillars painted with vegetable dyes.

Where to Stay and Eat

There are a few lodging options in Bhagamandala. Of these, KSTDC's **Hotel Mayura Talakavery** (Cell: 08970650030; Tariff: ₹1,344-1,456, dorm bed ₹200-300), has comfortable lodging. The hotel's dining hall serves good vegetarian food. For meals, the **Mayur Residency** is a clean eatery. You can also eat good vegetarian food at **Santosh Hotel**, right next to the temple.

Polibetta (39km)

Kodagu is a land of mesmerising beauty and scenic charm, which was a huge attraction for the British, who carved out a string of estates in the most spectacular of locales. Polibetta is considered the 'coffee home' of Coorg and is located 40km south-east of Madikeri, a part of Kodagu's 'Golden Quadrilateral'.

The Tata group, which has a great interest here in the coffee business, offers five 'holiday home' bungalows in the area that are now operated by Taj management, and serve up an excellent experiential sojourn of rich history, luxury and heritage.

The Polibetta Bungalow, with its wooden flooring and intricately engraved Victorian furniture, stands

tall atop the Western Ghats and provides a spectacular view of the multiple green hues of a vast coffee plantation. Meanwhile, the gorgeous 50-year old Glenlorna Bungalow with its sprawling bedrooms is best enjoyed with a steaming cup of tea, overlooking the only tea plantation in Kodagu. Although set in the quietude of the countryside, the five bungalows are far from old school — room service, laundry service, television channels, and wi-fi are available on-site.

Moreover, there are plenty of fun activities to keep you engaged throughout your stay. Birdwatching, photography, cycling, nature walks, trekking, golf and open-jeep drives through lush plantations, where you can learn about coffee-making techniques, can keep you busy. The fresh air infused with the aromas of coffee, vanilla, pepper and other spices add to the inexplicable beauty of the place.

Talacauvery (43km)

At Talacauvery, the shrine to goddess Kaveri is set against the backdrop of the Brahmagiri Hills, which rise up to 4,396ft. A dip in the spring at Talacauvery is the *punyasnana*, the holy dip. The only accommodation options, for Talacauvery, are in Bhagamandala (8km). ■

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→ GETTING THERE

Air Nearest airport: Kannur International Airport, Kerala (90km/2-3 hrs) and Bajpe International Airport, Mangaluru (136km/3-4 hrs). Both are well-connected to most major cities of India. Air India, Indigo, Spicejet, etc are some of the major carriers which serve domestic and international destinations. Taxi hire cost (two-way) from Kannur to Madikeri is ₹4,000-5,000, and from Mangaluru ₹5,000-6,000. KSRTC Volvo bus fare from Mangaluru is ₹500-700 and normal bus fare is ₹140-300. There are also private bus services to Madikeri (4 hrs/ ₹550-600)

Rail Nearest rail head: Hassan (104km) /Mysuru (117km). It is a 3-hr drive to Madikeri from both. Taxi to Madikeri costs around ₹4,000-5,000. There are KSRTC buses which ply from Hassan (4 hrs/₹123) and Mysuru (4 hrs/ ₹118-347) **Road** Madikeri is quite well connected by road as it lies on the SH-88 and can be easily accessed by road. **Bus** KSRTC buses ply regularly from Hassan (104km/ 4 hrs/ ₹123), Mysuru (117km/ 4 hrs/ ₹118-347), Mangaluru (136km/ 3-4 hrs/ ₹500-700) to Madikeri

#Awesomekarnataka





The St. Anne's Church spire is visible from afar amid the greenery

VIRAJPET

BORN OF A WAR

■ ANURAG MALLICK AND
PRIYA GANAPATHY

History recounts how the valiant Kodavas repeatedly took on the might of Hyder Ali and his son Tipu Sultan. After several rebellions, the Kodava king Veerarajendra I entered into an alliance with the British against the Tiger of Mysuru. It is said that Srirangapatna, Tipu's stronghold, was attacked by Lord Cornwallis from Bangalore and by General Abercrombie, the Governor of

Bombay, from the south via Heggale pass in Kodagu (Coorg), aided by Veerarajendra. The British and the Kodavas proved to be invaluable allies, especially in the Fourth Anglo-Mysore War, in which Tipu Sultan was killed. A new relationship was forged, which paved the way for a transfer of cultures — from British etiquette to Scotch and love for the gun and game. Legend has it that the Kodagu king Veerarajendra I founded a township in 1792 at the spot where he first met Major General Robert Abercrombie. He

called it Virarajendrapet after himself, which over the years, got truncated to Virajpet.

The cultural mix in Virajpet is what makes it different. After the Battle of Plassey in 1757 and the defeat of Nawab Siraj-ud-Daula by the British, many Bengali Muslims moved to the south, to settle in Kochi and Kannur. The Kodagu king invited them and various other communities to populate his newly founded town. About 100 descendants of these Bengali Muslims from Kannur came to Virajpet during mid-1790s. The area where they established homes is known as Bengali Street. Virajpet accommodated Bunts, Gowdas and Brahmins from South Kanara, Christians from Kannur and Periyapatna, Moplas from Malabar, Tamilians from Madras, Telugu Chettis from Andhra, Devangas and Jains from Mysuru; even today avenues like Telugu Street and Jain Street can be found in town!

Due to its proximity to the Kerala border, Virajpet developed as a key commercial centre of Kodagu. The country's first beekeepers' co-operative society was formed here in 1936 and Virajpet shot to fame as the highest producer of honey in Asia. One of the main districts of Coorg, Virajpet is a nodal town. Shops jostle against each other on either side of the narrow road that swoops and rises. The frenetic commercial activity, coupled with honks and people speaking different tongues adds to its vibrant air. The township is located at the

foot of Malethirke Hill, which wears a bottle-green cloak owing to its dense forest cover with the spire of St. Anne's Church visible from afar.

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→ FAST FACTS

When to go A good time to visit is between mid-December and June, when a series of annual festivals take place. The temples of local deities like Bhagavathy and Bhadrakali are at their colourful best. The first festival in Coorg is kick-started by Kundath Bott in Kunda Village (after Tula Sankaramana around October 17th/18th) and the last festival takes place at Barana Namme in Kandangala Village. The Bhadrakali namme (Kali festival) at Kukloor Village in Virajpet takes place around April 23 and is a colourful and spirited celebration.

Tourist Offices

● KSTDC

Hotel Mayura Talakavery
Virajpet-Talakaveri Road,
Bhagamandala,
Kodagu

Tel: 08272-243143
Cell: 08970650030

● Office of the Assistant Director

Department of Tourism
Stuart Hill, Madikeri, Kodagu
Tel: 08272-228580 (AD Office)
Cell: 09448004466 (TO)
Cell: 09844535509, 08073829204
(DTC)

STD code 08272

Stay at little homestays tucked away around town, visit a *devarakadu* (holy grove), play golf at Bittangala and escape to nearby getaways like Chelavara Falls, Nalknad Palace, Padi Igguthappa Temple, and Thadiandamol, the tallest peak in Kodagu. (See *Virajpet* on page 447)

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

Malethirke Hill

Virajpet town is dominated by the Malethirke hill, which commands a

magnificent view of the town. It's a steep climb and it's more sensible to take a jeep to reach the top. You need to disembark and trek up a short distance to visit the Shiva temple.

St. Anne's Church

A key landmark of Virajpet, St. Anne's was originally built as a small European-style church in 1792 under the direction of Father Gullivan with the support of Kodagu's rulers. It was dismantled in 1811 and again in 1868 to be replaced by a new spacious church in the present Gothic style. The most magnificent aspect is the 180ft steeple, besides the copper roof, decorated interiors and statues from the Bible. Although King Veerarajendra I presented a gold crown, an ornamental brass box and a brass lamp to the church, only the lamp with his inscription remains today. The location is picture-perfect as the church is tucked away from the road and rises amidst leafy coconut trees and red-roofed buildings with vast paddy fields on one side and the majestic Malethirke hill in the background.

Clocktower

A prominent landmark, the clocktower stands on an elevated point right in the middle of Virajpet's main street. It was built in 1911 by Mukkatira Aiyappa to commemorate British King George V's visit to India. An inscription on the clocktower mentions the foundation stone was laid by Sir Hugh Daly, the Chief Commissioner of Coorg, on February 5, 1915. There's a beautiful Ganesha

ANURAG MALLICK



The glass-like sheen of the crystal waters of Perambady Lake

temple right next to the clocktower and during the annual Ganesh Chaturthi festival, this busy Virajpet junction gets chock-a-block with devotees of the elephant god.

Perambady Lake

From Virajpet town, take the main road towards Kerala via Meenpet. Just a little past the check-post the road curves and the beautiful Perambady lake lies like a glimmering sheet of glass. The trees and the densely foliated hill looming in the background cast a stunning reflection in its still waters.

Golfing at Bittangala

The dew-drenched golf course is best experienced in the crisp morning air.

An 18-hole course (6950 yard, par 72 course), it hosts more than a dozen tournaments through the year. Interspersed with water bodies, tanks and natural hazards, the front nine holes are fun to play while the nine at the rear are flatter, narrower and more challenging.

◆ **Contact** Coorg Golf Links, Spring Valley Annexe, Bittangala Tel: 08274-298009

SHOPPING

Coffee, spices, honey, home-made wine and snacks can be bought from Virajpet and Gonikoppal. Pick up traditional Coorg jewellery like *peechekathi*, *odikathi*, *kupya chale*, *kokkethathi* and *jomale* at **Coorg**

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→ GETTING THERE

Air Nearest airport: Kannur International Airport, Kerala (58km/1-2 hrs), Bajpe Airport, Mangaluru (165km/4-5 hrs); Taxi from Kannur to Virajpet costs ₹1,200-1,400; and KSRTC Volvo bus fare is ₹400; from Mangaluru, KSRTC Volvo bus fare is ₹450-570

Rail Nearest railhead: Mysuru (110 km/ 2.5 hrs) is well connected to all major cities. Bus from Mysuru to Virajpet costs ₹110-140. Taxi fare is ₹2,500-3,000

Road Take the Mysuru highway and follow SH-88A to reach Virajpet via Tittimati, Gonikoppal and Bittangala. It takes about 5½ hrs from Bengaluru.

Bus From Mysuru (110km/2-3 hrs) KSRTC buses ply regularly on these routes. Fare: KSRTC/private buses ₹110-300; fare from Bengaluru (235km/5-6 hrs) is ₹550-600

Traditional Jewellery Works on Gonikoppal Road in Virajpet.

WHERE TO EAT

While driving into Kodagu, make a lunch stop at **Cuisine Papera** in Gowri Complex on the Virajpet-Mysuru Road in Gonikoppal. Try local Coorg cuisine like pork *choodals*, *voneyy yerchi* (smoked pork), *bemle* (bamboo shoot) and *pandi* curry.

WHERE TO STAY

37, Malabar Road (Cell: 09886827885; Tariff: ₹2,000-3,000) at Anugraha, 37/12B, Malabar Road, is an independent house located in town overlooking paddy fields, a garden and a backyard with a small patch of coffee bushes. Despite being close to town, the B&B is snug amidst

nature with neat and clean rooms and a sitout that serves as the dining area where home-cooked Kodava fare is served on request. Rooms are equipped with en suite bathrooms and TV. A trip to their coffee estate can be arranged at an additional cost. **Ambatty Greens** (Tel: 08274-298004, 298012; Cell: 09008785744; Tariff: ₹10,880-12,160 +breakfast) at Bittangala, Coorg Golf Links, is run by the Amritara chain. The golf resort is in a picturesque valley and offers 24 aesthetically designed rooms overlooking the 18-hole golf course and Ambatty Hills on the far side. The restaurant has an electric fireplace at its centre with an indoor and outdoor section overlooking the golf course and an attached bar. The complex has beautiful landscaping in a 2-acre patch, enhanced by two waterfalls, a lily pond, with plenty of

Kick back and relax at the serene Ambatty Greens



Courtesy AMBATTY GREENS

ANURAG MALLICK



Ritual dances are performed at festivals to honour the gods of sacred groves

Devarakadu: The sacred groves of Kodagu

Kodagu is the hotspot of the sacred grove tradition in the world and boasts the highest density of groves in the world. Sacred groves or temple forests are one of the oldest forms of conserving tropical forests. Of the 1,214 sacred forests in Kodagu, 508 are in Virajpet Taluk. These groves are named after local gods (165 local deities, many from Kerala) and managed by local village communities.

The most prominent deity is Ayyappa, with 162 groves dedicated to him. Botekara Ayyappa is Shiva in hunter form accompanied by dogs, with offerings of terracotta dogs. Many *devarakadus* are dedicated to Chamundi, Bhadrakali, Bhagavathy, or Kali — different names for Shakti; she is offered terracotta horses. In Virajpet region, several *devarakadus* are dedicated to *Sarthaavu* (form of Shiva). Around Somwarpet, the sacred groves are

dedicated to Subbamma, Gangadeshwara, or Murudeshwara, deities from the Hassan or old Mysuru district. In Mercara and Sampaje, influences from South Canara and Kerala prevail, and lots of *devarakadus* are dedicated to *naga devas*. Annual festivals or *namme* see vibrant temple dances, such as the *Bolakk aat* (lamp dance), *Kathi aat* (knife dance), *Peeli aat* (peacock feather dance), *Komb aat* (stag horn dance) and *Chowri aat* (yak tail/bison tail dance) being performed. Some noted *devarakadus* include the Ayyappa *devarakadu* in Kollatholbaigod village. The sacred grove has a huge monolithic rock and a smaller obelisk nearby, signifying his younger brother Pollappa (Subramanya). The Vana Bhadrakali *devarakadu* lies just off the main road from Virajpet-Bittangala towards Hathur village. The 16-acre grove has an annual festival on June 15.

ANURAG MALLICK



The Chelavara Falls are formed by a tributary of river Cauvery

greenery, and open space. **Coorg Golf Links** (Tel: 298009; Cell: 09740260346; Tariff: ₹3,000; TE) at Spring Valley Annexe, Bittangala, has six rooms (open only to members and their guests) a restaurant, a snooker table and bridge as additional recreation. The conference hall can be booked through members.

AROUNDS

Kadanga (10km)

Kadanga serves as a vital link to Kodagu's feudal past. The *kadangas* of Kodagu are said to be the most ancient war trenches known in the world, mentioned in stone inscriptions dating back to 888 and have existed long before the use of fortifications. The town is named after these war trenches, which were

20-40ft deep and 10ft wide. Their linear extent is estimated as 500 to 600 miles in ancient times. Although traces of these *kadangas* can be found, most have disappeared due to intensive land use. Admire the sunset over Soma Male, visit the Balamuri Ganesha temple or trudge up to the Bhagavathy temple, 2km from town. The annual festival at the Bhagavathy temple, usually on March 21-24, culminates with the priest going into a trance and performing twelve different dances around the temple. On March 28, the Choundi Teray (festival of Chamundi's spirit) takes place and three chosen persons become channels of the deities. During the *teray*, similarly attired and face-painted like Kerala's Theyyam, they get possessed by the three gods and become oracles as

they walk over burning heaps of coal and leaping flames.

Where to stay

Springdale Estate Villa (Cell: 07676107777; Tariff: ₹3,500 +breakfast; TE) is located at Kadanga, Arapattu Village.

A short drive from the main road takes you up a long driveway leading to lush coffee and spice plantations for a luxe countryside stay with four spacious double room villas. Stroll around the plantation, which has a stream flowing through it, go birdwatching, angling, trekking or just curl up with a book on the balcony that offers great views of the property. Lunch and dinner served on request ₹400 pp, at the resort's in-house restaurant.

The Windchimes Retreat (Cell: 09686976113, 09513331333; Tariff: ₹4,500-7,500 + breakfast; TE) at Manjunatha Estate, Heggala Road, is set in the hills of Virajpet on a 50-acre estate; the resort offers a Chimes standard room and Wind room, both with king-size panel beds, balcony, wardrobe, leather sofa and bathroom. Amenities include minibar, tea/coffee maker, LED TV and iron.

Chelavara Falls (22km)

A natural waterfall formed by a small

tributary of the river Cauvery near Cheyandane on the way to Kabbe Holidays homestay. The falls are visible after walking a few metres into the forest and gush down from a height of 150ft on a rock shaped like a tortoise, thus called *embepare* (tortoise rock) in the local language. The deceptively beautiful falls are approximately 100ft deep in parts. One can easily get pulled into its dangerous waters and cautionary signs warn visitors against getting into the water. More than 20 people have died here. The falls are at their best during monsoon.

Kabbe Pass (23km)

Kabbe Pass has been the proverbial bridge between Kodagu and Kerala as trade and culture crossed borders over the years. Through the pass, spices and rice from Kodagu were exchanged for salt from Kerala, resulting in the subsequent transmigration of culture. The open shrines of Kodagu acquired the typical Kerala roof and the rain god Igguthappa, with his brothers and sister, crossed the hills from Kerala to Kodagu. You can trek to the pass to see the green hills of Kerala gradually stretching out on one side while Chomakund, Hanging Rock, Kabbe Kund, Baliyatra, and Baliyakund loom on the Coorg side. ■

#Awesomemkarnataka





ALAMY IMAGES / INDIA PICTURE

The majestic Thadiyendamol peak is the tallest in Kodagu

KAKKABE

CLOUD-CLOAKED MOUNTAIN

■ ANURAG MALICK AND
PRIYA GANAPATHY

Thadiyendamol stood tall. For centuries, he had been the lone sentinel, towering over lesser peaks and serving as a landmark to seafarers. The tallest peak in Kodagu, on a clear day he could see as far as the coast. Over time, he had seen spices from Kodagu being exchanged for salt from Kerala. He had observed also the subsequent exchange of culture. How the open shrines of Kodagu acquired the typical Kerala roof. And he watched

the rain god Igguthappa, along with his siblings, migrate from Kerala to Kodagu. Soon after, the sky darkened. Igguthappa had smiled; he brought rain. A Malabar whistling thrush, his blue-black coat ruffled, was caught unawares by the fat drops of rain. Thadiyendamol had covered himself in a giant white cloak and disappeared from view.... Now it is just you, the amplified sounds of a rainforest come alive and a faint mountain trail, with no end in sight.

Not too long ago, this little village in the heart of the south-west Kodagu rainforest used to be the largest

honey producer in South-East Asia. But a chance virus wiped out the resident bee population. What you lose on the swings, you gain on the roundabouts. The bee crisis deflected attention to something more than honey — the bountiful nature that produced it. Birdwatchers and backpackers realised that there's more to Kodagu than Madikeri. They marched through the clouds to rediscover Thadiyendamol, and the sleepy Kodava village of Kakkabe in the shadow of the great mountain.

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

With a landscape not tarnished by Coca Cola signboards, Kakkabe is nature's laboratory. It can transform a boring natural science class into an exciting practical tour. It offers interactive modules on the formation of clouds, the manufacture of honey, and the process of cross-pollination — with waterfalls, gurgling streams and treks as your break periods.

The rainforest cover gives the region a rich bounty of rare orchids, plants and birds. Scenic treks take you to Mallamma Betta, Soma Male and Kabbe Pass, from where you can see clouds caressing Kerala's hills.

Thadiyendamol

There's something awe-inspiring about the name itself. Derived from Malayalam to loosely mean 'I'm the Tallest' (*thadi* means broad, *yenda* is mine and *mol* is top), Thadiyendamol, at 5,730ft, is the highest peak in Kodagu and the second highest in

Karnataka after Mullaiyanagiri in the Baba Budan Range. Thadiyendamol lures trekkers with the promise of a glimpse of the coastline.

The trek is gentle, but the last quarter is a steep climb. The 2½-hr climb (one-way) from Palace Estate (see page 438) is shorter, but the longer 3½-hr climb from Honey Valley Estate (see *Where to Stay and Eat* on page 183) passes through thick rainforest and more scenic terrain.

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→ FAST FACTS

When to go Kakkabe is accessible throughout the year, but avoid July-August when the rainforest receives heavy showers and teems with leeches. The post-monsoon months are very rewarding for birdwatchers. Ideal season is between September and May

Tourist Offices

● KSTDC ● ●

Hotel Mayura Talakavery
Virajpet-Talakaveri Road,
Bhagamandala, Kodagu
Tel: 08272-243143
Cell: 08970650030

● Office of the Assistant Director ●

Department of Tourism
Stuart Hill, Madikeri,
Kodagu
Tel: 08272-228580 (AD Office)
Cell: 09448004466 (TO)
Cell: 09844535509, 08073829204
(DTC)

STD code 08272

Igguthappa Temple

Whoever said 'there's no such thing as a free lunch', has obviously not been to the Igguthappa Temple. Not only are you handed *prasada* on a platter, you are given a three-course meal of *payasam*, rice and two types of *sambhar* with wild mango pickle to boot (1pm to 2pm). Worshipped as 'one who gives grain' (*iggu* is Kodava for 'grain', *thappa* means 'to give'), Igguthappa is the *de facto* rain god. Such are his powers that he has expanded his portfolio to include any wish that you may ask for — an engineering degree, a child, or the girl of your dreams! Thousands gather for the **Kaliyarchi Festival** in March when the god is taken on a procession to the top of **Mallama Betta** and reinstalled in the temple, followed by ceremonial dances. The official date of the harvest festival **Huthri** is also determined here. The

temple is 2½km from Kakkabe. Get onto the road to Madikeri. Take a left under the arch. After a kilometre, take a right to the temple.

♦ **Timings** 6am-2pm, 6pm-7pm **Puja timings** 6am-12.30pm

Nalknad Palace

Built in 1792 by Doddaveeraraja, Nalknad Palace served as the royal hunting lodge and summer home of the Kodava kings. Since there were four villages in the vicinity, the place was called *Nal-nadu*, a Kodava word, which over time got shortened to Nalknad. Call it what you will, a palace it isn't. A double-storey structure with a conical roof, the decrepit building has intricate wooden friezes and wall murals. The local Kapala tribals — they are originally believed to be from Ethiopia — were brought here by the king from Kerala to look after (*pala*) the palace. Located on the road to Virajpet, 3½km from Kakkabe, the palace is quite neglected, with just a caretaker to look after it. He'll let you into the palace. Entry is free.

Rock climbing and treks

A 1-hr walk to **Nilakandi Waterfall**, 3km away, is one of the shorter treks. Apart from barking deer, pangolin and the flying squirrel, it's a good place to spot the honey-loving South Indian marten. There are many other routes of varying difficulty. Suresh Chengappa of Honey Valley Estate has marked out 28 of them. Palace Estate has the ideal terrain for trekking, streams and a 50ft waterfall. Guides are available.



An ornate structure next to Nalknad Palace; worship of rain god Igguthappa



Photographs: ANURAG MALLICK

WHERE TO STAY AND EAT

Palace Estate (Cell: 09483198446, 09880447702; Tariff: ₹3,600-4,300 +breakfast, dinner and tea/coffee) at Kakkabe Post stands on a flat patch just above the 18th century Nalknad Palace; the estate offers a spectacular view. This converted wooden granary on pillars has a porch to prop your feet up and soak in the views of Kodagu's rolling hills. The homestay can accommodate up to 18 people. The 50-acre farm, located on the edge of a forest, grows coffee, cardamom, pepper, silk and bananas. Endowed with an exceptionally wide range of native trees, flowers and birds, Palace Estate also has a wild mountain stream. There's farm-fresh fruit, organic coffee and Kodagu cuisine on

offer and the odd Continental breakfast thrown in. Lunch (₹200) on request. **Misty Woods** (Tel: 08272-238561; Cell: 09448406405; Tariff: Cottage ₹7,000-11,000 +breakfast and dinner) is located on a lush 100-acre estate with two waterfalls. Well-spaced cottages in three categories — the Mansion House, Vernacular Styled Cottages, Fairytale Cottages — offer 21 rooms built aesthetically using clay bricks and wood, large bedrooms and swanky attached baths. They have an Ayurveda centre, a huge thatched gazebo, and a restaurant serving Kerala, Coorg, North Indian, and Chinese cuisine.

Coorg Coffee Country (Cell: 09686401945; Tariff: ₹3,200-4,250 +meals) at Palace Road has 16 rooms spread across a riverside villa and

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→ GETTING THERE

Air Nearest airport: Mangaluru Airport (172km/ 5 hrs) and Bengaluru (260km/ 8hrs). Bengaluru is well connected to most other cities in India and also abroad. Taxi charge ₹9-16 per km

Rail Nearest railhead: Mysuru (127km/ 3hrs). Taxis charge ₹9-16 per km

Road Take the road from Bengaluru via Srirangapatnam-Hunsur-Kushalnagar-Madikeri-Napoklu Nad-Virajpet road for about 31km to reach Kakkabe

Kodavas: An unusual race

Kodavas or Coorgs, the natives of Kodagu, form a tight knit society that fiercely guards its unique customs and traditions. With their origins shrouded in mystery, the Kodavas have intrigued historians and anthropologists alike – from theories of Greek or Indo-Scythian ancestry and links to Kurdistan and Arabia (their sash and dagger is very similar to Yemen and the Omani *khanjar*). The Puranas refer to this land as Krodadesa while the Kodavas consider themselves as children blessed by Goddess Kaveri (thought to be derived from *kod*, 'to give' and *ava* or 'mother').

Being animists and ancestor worshippers, they maintain *devarakadus* (sacred groves) and offer *meedi* (ritual offering) to their *karona* (ancestors). Weddings and ceremonies are marked by the absence of priests, officiated instead by elders. Kodavas have characteristic names, including a *maneypeda* (clan name) through which they trace their lineage. Historically, agriculture, sports and war have been their prime occupations and their martial tradition is reflected in their emblem – the overlapping weapons of *odikathi* (broad sword) and *peechekathi* (dagger). Some of the country's best-known soldiers, like Field Marshall KM Cariappa and General KS Thimayya, are from Coorg. A popular

adage goes that 'a Kodava is born with a gun in one hand and a hockey stick in the other'. They have martial dances and are exempted from the Arms Act since the British days, thus permitting them to own a firearm within Coorg without a licence. They have a distinctive traditional costume; men wear a *kupya* (black wraparound robe) and *chaley* (brocaded red silk sash) with a 'check vastra' (chequered red headscarf). Kodava women have a unique sari drape, done toga-style with the pleats tucked at the back and the *pallu* taken over the front right shoulder. Formerly knotted, it is today clasped with an ornamental brooch. The unusual style commemorates the legend of River Kaveri's swift currents that are believed to have turned their sari pleats backwards.

Kodavas speak a dialect known as Kodava thakk and use the Kannada script. Besides Coorg coffee, honey, oranges and spices, Kodagu is famed for its distinct ethnic cuisine, made from locally abundant ingredients like *kumme* (mushrooms), *bemle* (bamboo shoot), *termey* (ferns), *kemb* (colocasia) and the *legendary pandi* (pork) curry seasoned with the local vinegar, kachampuli and paired with *kadambuttu* (steamed rice dumplings) or *akki otti* (rice roti).

two deluxe and semi-deluxe blocks. **Honey Valley** (Tel: 238339; Cell: 08197444939; Tariff: ₹550-3,950; TE) is located in the Honey Valley Estate. The 56-acre farm is popular with families, nature and adventure

enthusiasts. **King's Cottage** (Cell: 09567270165, 09845963883; Tariff ₹3,600 +breakfast and dinner) in the Palace Estate area, nestles amongst forested hills and coffee plantations and overlooks carpets of green and

gold paddy fields. It has 10 double rooms. Home-cooked Kodava food adds a special touch.

The Tamara Coorg (Tel: 238000, Bengaluru reservations 080-71077700; Cell: 09739833939; Tariff ₹14,000-₹18,000 +breakfast; TE) is at Kabbinakad Estate, Yavakapadi village. Part of its charm is the 4km drive off the main road to the resort past hairpin bends. Running through a private 181-acre coffee plantation on a fenced 8-acre patch landscaped with exotic plants, the 5-star resort offers plush wood-panelled Balinese cottages on stilts with a balcony. There are 56 rooms across 29 villas. Elevation, the spa set in a beautiful 140-year-old Subedar Bungalow, offers signature coffee therapy and other *anubhavas* (experiences) and has a Yoga Temple designed like the sanctum sanctorum of a temple. The resort's green efforts include an organic vegetable garden, waste segregation site and in-house Gaushala or cow barn, developed for breeding indigenous livestock such as the Malenadu Gidda.

NOTE Children below 12 years of age are not allowed at the resort because of the risky steep terrain.

For more, see *Kakkabe Accommodation Listings on pages 438-439*

AROUND

Nadikeriyenda Ainmane, Karada (23km)

About 11km from Kakkabe, Karada is known for its spectacular *ain-mane* (traditional ancestral home) of the Nadikeriyenda family. The turn through the arch takes you 1km inside to what is considered one of Kodagu's best preserved ancestral homes with a typical inner courtyard and profusely carved doorway and windows. The road then forks to a gorgeous viewpoint.

Where to Stay and Eat

Keemalekad Estate (Cell: 099806 66766; Tariff: ₹1,400-1,750pp) at Karada Village offers a rustic eco-adventure experience. Apart from the traditional Kodagu non-veg dishes, Keemale's menu offers organically grown, local vegetarian delicacies. Lunch/dinner ₹300pp.

Kabbe Holidays (Cell: 09448976460, 07259278429; Tariff ₹4,000-4,500 +breakfast) at Chelavara Village is on a plantation. With three waterfalls in the area, a brook, a natural pool and a hike to Kabbe Pass presenting magnificent views of Kerala, it is a birdwatcher's paradise and an ideal base for nature lovers. The cuisine is a scrumptious spread of Coorgi dishes. ■

#Awesomemkarnataka





SHUTTERSTOCK

Tigers at the Nagarhole National Park

NAGARHOLE NATIONAL PARK

CALL OF THE WILD

■ ANURAG MALLICK AND
PRIYA GANAPATHY

Once an exclusive hunting preserve of the Maharajas of Mysuru, Nagarhole is today the beacon of conservation as the hub of two of India's most reputable wildlife schemes — Project Elephant and Project Tiger. Situated in the Deccan Plateau, it also forms an integral part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve. The Nagarhole river, literally 'Serpent Stream' winds through the

park and finally meets the Kabini, the largest river draining the forest. A dam built on the Kabini has created a splendid lake south of the park, which separates it from Bandipur Tiger Reserve. To the southeast lies the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary, while to the west, coffee plantations separate the park from the Brahmagiri Wildlife Sanctuary. Such proximity to wildlife buffers and gently sloping landscape with shallow valleys makes Nagarhole a top wild getaway. Spotting a tiger at Nagarhole

National Park makes for a truly thrilling experience.

The creation of Nagarhole National Park can be traced to the notification of a 285 sq km game reserve in 1955, which included the reserve forests of Arkeri, Hatgat, and Nalkeri in Kodagu. In 1974, reserve forests from Mysuru district were added and it was upgraded to the status of a National Park in 1998. Though the park was renamed after the late Rajiv Gandhi, it is still called by its popular name, Nagarhole. Interspersed with the forests are swampy areas called *hadlus* dominated by grasses — grazing grounds for many herbivores. Sprouting grass in the meadows attract elephants and gaur in large numbers besides sambar, Indian muntjac, mouse deer, four-horned antelope, wild boar, crested porcupine and black-naped hare. Leopards can be found along the fringes. Other carnivores include jungle cat, dhole (Asiatic wild dog), striped hyena, and jackal. The resident primates include the common langur and bonnet macaque, sloth bear, pangolin, giant squirrel, flying squirrel, giant fruit bat and the elusive slender loris.

Watch a red flameback woodpecker busily chip away at a tree and slow down to strain your ears and identify birdcalls from a forest cacophony of squawks, hoots and twitters. The diversity of Nagarhole's vegetation has resulted in a wide variety of birds. Spot the red spur-fowl, grey junglefowl, blue-faced malkhoa, the yellow-browed bulbul, white-cheeked barbet, Nilgiri fly-

catcher, Malabar pied hornbill, golden-backed parakeet, southern tree pie, grasshopper warbler, orphean warbler, yellow-billed babbler, green imperial pigeon and the white-bellied woodpecker.

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→ FAST FACTS

When to go November to February is ideal weather, though animals flock to the watering holes in the dry summer season, so chances of sightings increase significantly.

Tourist/Wildlife/ Forest Dept Offices

- Conservator of Forest and Field Director 📍
- Project Tiger
- Rajiv Gandhi NP/ Nagarhole Tiger Reserve

Forest Campus

Hunsur

Tel: 08222-252041

📧 Nagarhole.tigerreserve.com

- Office of the Assistant Director 📍

Department of Tourism

Stuart Hill, Madikeri,

Kodagu

Tel: 08272-228580

Cell: 09448004466 (TO), 09844535509,

08073829204 (DTC)

- KSTDC 📍

Hotel Mayura Valley View

Near Raja's Seat, Stuart Hill,

Madikeri

Cell: 08970650028

STD code Hunsur 08222

Madikeri 08272

Nagarhole also has owl species such as the short-eared owl, Oriental scops owl, and spot-bellied eagle owl. Sometimes, a drive down the Nagarhole Main Road is more enriching than a foray into its trails with tuskers frequently spotted by the roadside.

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

Wildlife safari

Nagarhole is perhaps one of the finest remaining habitats of the Asian Elephant in India. Huge herds amble down in the summer months, which is an excellent time to watch them in their element. Nagarhole is worth visiting in the dry season, when wild animals are spotted in large numbers near sources of water. Spread over 640 sq km (combining core and

A Gaur spotted at Nagarhole



ANURAG MALLICK

buffer zones), the park offers great sighting opportunities as a 30m area on either side of the forest tracks is regularly cleared of vegetation, allowing an unobstructed view. However, the tourism zone covers only a small patch of 30 sq km and the Forest Department's wildlife safari is in a 20-seater canter that barely lasts over an hour.

◆ **Entry fee:** ₹250 **Timings:** 6am-8am, 2.30pm-4pm **Safari Forest Dept bus Adult:** ₹500, Child/Student ₹250 **Camera:** ₹200-400; **JLR Contact** Veeranahosalli and Nanchi Gate, Cell 09632566454

Whitewater rafting

The advent of monsoons in Kodagu brings the additional thrill of white water rafting in the KKR or Upper Barapole river, not far from the Nagarhole National Park. Since the Barapole river is rain-fed, the gushing waters last for three to four months after mid-June till November.

◆ **Contact** Southern River Adventures Cell: 09845514122

WHERE TO STAY AND EAT

Forest Guest House (Cell: 09844204083; Tariff: ₹1,600-2,000, full dorm: ₹2,400 +entry charges) at Nagarhole Tourist Complex, inside the forest.

The Forest Department guest-house gives you a chance to stay where all the action is. The forest lodges are located on a patch next to the information centre-cum-booking office. The food here is basic vegetarian fare. Though it is

SHUTTERSTOCK



An elephant family holds its ground in the face of advancing tourist vehicles

the only lodging available inside the park, daytime and weekends are noisy with tourists and vehicles. Mornings and evenings are magical with the jungle coming alive with chirping birds and alarm calls.

For bookings, contact DCF Hunsur or Chief Wildlife Warden, Bengaluru Tel: 080-23345846.

Tiger Teak (Cell: 09900652459, 08861736831; Tariff: ₹1,500-2,000 +breakfast, dinner) at Begoor Village, Nagarhole Road, Nalkeri Forest, is a simple, fully furnished homestay with good views from the balcony. Bring your own snacks and beverages. **NOTE** Under renovation.

Spice Glade (Cell: 09945274533, 09880218048; Tariff: ₹3,900-4,300 +breakfast, dinner) at Kutta, south Kodagu, is a picturesque and nicely

secluded homestay set in a 30-acre plantation just 2km from the forest, and has four spacious rooms with en suite bathrooms. Home-made fresh food includes Kodava cuisine.

Bison Manor Country Retreat (Cell: 08277455379, 09900700768; Tariff: ₹3,400-4,030, tents ₹1,400pp, dorm ₹1,200pp) at New Grand Estate, Kutta, is a boutique country jungle retreat 5km from Nagarhole. It offers nine rooms (standard and deluxe), besides a dorm and tent. The Hornbill multi-cuisinerestaurant serves veg and non-veg fare from South Indian, North Indian, and Chinese cuisines. The property features a playground and terrace, with lots of greenery around the coffee estate. Trekking and wildlife safaris are arranged on request.

Machan Wilderness Lodge (Cell: 08970335544; Tariff ₹6,600-8,260+all meals) at Nagarhole Churicad, K Badaga village, Srimangala, is tucked away in the middle of a coffee estate. Its tastefully designed rooms are built with minimum ecological footprint and

offer a great view of the surrounding plantation. There are 12 rooms in a choice of twin cottages with rustic interiors and modern bathroom and multilevel cabin rooms with separate entrances and sitouts. Vana restaurant serves local Coorgi and South Indian fare and offers a 360-degree view of the estate. The Library Lounge comes with an indoor fireplace and wildlife tales of the national park adorning the walls, besides freshly brewed filter coffee and cold pressed juices served. Safaris, bonfires and barbecues are organised on request.

Narikadi Estate (Cell: 09845134464; Tariff: ₹3,400 +breakfast and dinner) at Kutta stands at the edge of the sanctuary on Kutta main road and offers six spacious rooms offering simple comfort, and pet-friendly ambience with homely food. The **Kadama Kolli Resort** (Cell: 09481101158, 09341101158; Tariff: ₹6,500 +breakfast and dinner) at Parakatageri (Pookola) village and post office, 12km from Birunani town, is a scenic getaway in the foothills of Brahmagiri. It has five independent cottages and two independent houses. The cottages can take four persons in each comfortably, while the independent houses can fit 12 people each, making it great for groups and families looking for a digital detox. Activities include jungle gym, whitewater rafting and herpetology walks and workshops.

JLR King's Sanctuary (Cell: 09449597878, 09449599796; Tariff: ₹6,280-8,496pp +all meals) at

Courtesy KADAMA KOLLI RESORT



The Kadama Kolli Resort is great for big groups of friends or extended families

Veeranahosahalli, Hunsur Taluk, is set in a 40-acre mango orchard. This eco-friendly resort offers a mix of AC luxury suites and adobe-style cottage clusters spread across green lawns, each with verandah, bedrooms fitted out with woven furniture sourced from Thailand and Indonesia, a courtyard and open-to-sky bathrooms. Lagoon suites fringe a 6-acre lake, with islands of mango trees. The multi-cuisine restaurant dishes out local Mysuru delicacies, Indian, Chinese and Continental. Besides jungle safaris, activities include zipline, paintball, jumarring, board games, swimming, cycling et.

Jungle Inn (Tel: 08222-246022; Cell: 09902363906; Tariff: ₹2,500-3,500) at 19th km, Hunsur-Nagarhole Road, Veeranahosahalli,

is on the northern fringes of Nagarhole and stands right at the entrance to the park, making it vibrant with plant and animal life. Open-top jeep safaris, eco-tours, treks, campfires, film show, coracle rides and fishing can also be arranged. The accommodation comprises 10 double rooms (six regular and four large standard); 6 Swiss tented cottages to fit four persons; and four family rooms/dorms. Food is served only at the Gudara, a spacious thatched hut. They also run the rustic Sundara Vana Farmstay near Hunsur that accommodates up to 20 people.

Chilligeri Estate (Tel: 08274-244265; Cell: 09448582496, 09845803904; Tariff ₹1,900pp +breakfast, dinner, tea, snacks), at Manchalli, near Kutta, is named

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→ GETTING THERE

Air Nearest airport: Kannur International Airport, Kerala (112km/1-2 hrs), Bajpe Airport, Mangaluru (250km/5-6hrs); Taxi from Kannur to Nagarhole NP costs ₹1,500-2,000; KSRTC bus fare ₹100-250; from Mangaluru, KSRTC Volvo bus fare is ₹450-570

Rail Nearest railhead: Mysuru (130 km/ 2-3 hrs) is well connected to all major cities. Bus from Mysuru to Kutta costs ₹150. From Kutta (7km) to Nagarhole by auto costs ₹100-200. Taxi fare from Mysuru to Nagarhole is ₹3,000-4,000

Road Take the Mysuru highway bypass via Ranganathittu onto SH-88 and after Hunsur turn towards Nagarhole via Murkal and Veeranahosahalli. The road closes after sunset. The nearest town is Kutta (7km) on the southern fringe of the park while Hunsur is 45km away and Gonikoppal 40km. The drive takes about 5-6 hrs from Bengaluru. **Bus** from Mysuru (130km/2-3 hrs), KSRTC buses ply regularly on these routes. Fare: KSRTC/ private buses ₹150-200; bus fare from Bengaluru (250km/5-6hrs) is ₹300-400

after the pepper vines abounding on the plantation and the picturesque Brahmagiri mountain range forming a backdrop. Chilligeri is a century-old cottage set on a 100-acre plantation of coffee, pepper, betel nut, and banana. Alluring with red-roof tiles and red-oxide floors, the cottage has standard rooms for families and couples, besides an outhouse or family cottage for five adults. The lovely garden and fabulous view of the Brahmagiri range from your window are other highlights. Foodwise, there is ethnic cuisine and exotic homemade wines. Activities include trekking, visit to tea garden, safaris at Nagarhole National Park, and Tholpetty Wildlife Sanctuary.

Irupu Rameshwara Temple



ANURAG MALLICK

AROUNDS

Tholpetty Wildlife Sanctuary, Wayanad (8km)

Wildlife enthusiasts can hop across the state border from Karnataka to Kerala, just a few kilometres south of Kutta. Jeeps and guides can be arranged to take you to the Tholpetty Forest Range of the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary. Cost for the jeep hire from Nagarhole and the guide fee are negotiable; however, if you have your own vehicle, drive through the elephant migratory corridor to Thirunelly temple at the base of the Brahmagiri Hill and Wildlife Sanctuary nearby.

◆ **Timings** 7am-10am and 3pm-5pm.
Contact Asst. Wildlife Warden, Tholpetty, Tel: 04935-250853

Irupu Falls (15km)

The beauty of Irpu Falls is heightened after the rains, when the rainforest is glossy green and the 51.8m cascade becomes a raging torrent. A visit at any other time of the year could be a tad disappointing. Scarcely 1km from the Ishwara Temple, the well marked-out trail to the falls winds past a sacred banyan tree before disappearing into the forest to the Brahmagiri Wildlife Sanctuary. Along the walk from the Ishwara Temple to Irpu, spot colourful birds and brilliantly hued butterflies. Endemic to the Western Ghats, the Malabar banded peacock, common banded peacock, and Paris peacock can be seen here. Located near Kurchi village, Irpu is 7km from Kutta, and 9km from Srimangala.

ANURAG MALLICK



The beautiful Irpu Falls are at their picturesque best right after the monsoons

Irupu Rameshwara Temple (14km)

The Ishwara Temple is also known as Irpu Rameshwara Temple, as it is believed that Lord Rama consecrated the Shiva *linga*. The story goes that Rama and Lakshmana were returning victorious from Lanka and crossing over the Brahmagiri Hills from Kerala to Kodagu, when Lakshmana felt a sudden surge of anger. He handed his bow and quiver to Rama and stomped off; but oddly, the moment he stepped into Kodava land, his anger dissipated.

Rama explained to his brother that Kerala's earth could incite passions while Kodagu bestowed calmness. A remorseful Lakshmana shot an arrow into Brahmagiri and threatened to consign himself to the flames that shot forth. Rama created

the Lakshmana Teertha, extinguished the fire and blessed its waters with the power to absolve a person of his sins. Some believe it was Lakshmana's tears of regret that became the Lakshmana Teertha. To sanctify the spot, Rama instructed Hanuman to get a *linga* from Kashi. When Hanuman didn't return as the appointed hour drew near, Rama shaped a *linga* out of mud and he was about to consecrate it, when Hanuman arrived.

Upset that Rama had doubted him, Hanuman wrapped his tail around a mountain in anger, but Rama pacified him by shooting an arrow and proclaiming that the Kashi *linga* would be installed wherever the arrow landed. He further decreed that the temple at Permad would

have more significance than the Ishwara Temple at Irpu. Hanuman was calmed, but the imprint of his tail was left forever on Hanumantabetta. Irpu in Sanskrit means 'enemies', hinting that the

Bode Namme: South Coorg's tribal fest

About 7km after Nagarhole lies the town of Kutta. Legend has it that the goddess Kali came and settled with the low-caste Kurubas, and had a child. She called him Kutta and the place where he was born was named after him. A festival is celebrated every year in Mid-April to May in honour of the Kurubas all over South Coorg. Called the Bode Namme, festival, it always starts on a Tuesday and is a time when Kuruba men dress up in loud garish clothes as women, go begging for alms, drink themselves silly and sing bawdy songs. In this fortnight of revelry, tribals are literally found littered across the landscape, rather sloshed or passed out due to exhaustion. However, refined Kodavas steer clear of this chaotic festival, often packing their children indoors as soon as they hear the crazy trumpets in the distance.



place could turn even brothers into enemies. Kodavas believe that when siblings fight in Coorg, it is because of this curse. It is customary to pay your respects at the Irpu temple before taking a dip in the Lakshmana Teertha. The temple has a low *shikhara* and a circular *garbha griha* in Kerala style, with shrines of Gandharva, Bhairava, Mahadeva, Ganapathi, and Parvathi. An inscription dated 1763 marks the renovation of the temple and records the legend of Rama.

Where to Stay

Ramcad Estate Guest House (Cell: 09448144982; Tariff ₹1,800pp +meals) near Irpu Falls is a lovely homestay on a 40-acre coffee and pepper plantation. It has been named as Ram's Forest (Ram Cad). The homely place offers five cottages that can accommodate three people in each and around 15 to 20 people in total. There's a separate dining facility in each of the cottages.

Tropical Blooms (Cell: 09008163304, 09448475222; Tariff: ₹3,000, dorm ₹2,500pp +all meals) on MN Irpu Road lies in the foothills of the Brahmagiri range and offers elegant premium rooms and dorms, a cosy lounge stocked with books, TV in common areas and a dining room where buffet North Indian, South Indian and local fare are served. The sprawling lawn is great for campfires and barbecues with great hill views all around.

Sherlock's Jungle Retreat (Cell: 09591762383; Tariff: ₹4,200+ breakfast), located 400m from Irpu

SHUTTERSTOCK



A Nilgiri langur spotted at Brahmagiri Wildlife Sanctuary

Falls, is an ochre-coloured homestay that has a wide choice of accommodation — four standard rooms, two deluxe rooms (for 3 pax), and two family rooms for eight people. There's a restaurant serving home-cooked Indian and local dishes, indoor and outdoor games, a plantation trek, duck pond, and 24-hrs power backup.

Brahmagiri Wildlife Sanctuary (110km)

Spread over 181 sq km, the Brahmagiri Wildlife Sanctuary stretches in a wide arc from Kutta to Makutta. The diverse habitat ranges from lowland rainforests in Makutta Wildlife Range to high-altitude shola-grasslands in the Srimangala Wildlife Range. The

sanctuary is contiguous with the Aralam Wildlife Sanctuary in Kerala and a forested corridor punctuated by coffee plantations connects it to Wayanad and Nagarhole.

The evergreen forests are dense and moist with very little light streaming in through the canopy. The forests abound with gaur, sloth bear, elephant, barking deer, tiger, leopard, jungle cat, primates like lion-tailed macaque, bonnet macaque, and the Nilgiri langur, besides the Nilgiri marten or *chingekooli*, and the elusive slender loris.

The area is great for birdwatching and butterflies. The best time is October to May. Stop by at the Reserve Forest Office at Srimangala before taking the diversion to Irpu to

Courtesy WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



Glenlorna Tea Estate is a rare jewel in the predominantly coffee country of Kodagu

avoid backtracking for permissions. After a written permission, guides accompany you to the Forest Rest House on Brahmagiri's summit.

The 4km trek from Irpu Falls (2-3 hrs) leads to the Forest Rest House at Narimalaibetta, from where Narimala Peak is a 1½km trek. The mountain literally means 'Tiger Hill', as tigers used to inhabit the area. The basic two-room Forest Rest House is equipped with a kitchen, so pick supplies beforehand. See the imprint of what is believed to be Hanuman's tail on Hanumantabetta. From the FRH, about ½km along the path to the right, two signboards indicate treks to the Brahmagiri range and the Munikal Caves. The 5km return

trek from the Forest Rest House leads to the highest point in the range, the Brahmagiri peak (1,740m). From there, a 2½km trek leads to Munikal (literally 'Sage Rock'), the Kannada name for Pakshipathalam. It is said that the ancient caves were the meditation spot for sages. The deep valley is an excellent birdwatching site. Return the same way or hike 7km downhill to Thirunelli and come back to Irpu via Kutta.

◆ **Entry fee ₹150 Trekking fees ₹200 Guides ₹500**

TIP **Permits** For trekking or stay at Narimalaibetta, contact Srimangala Forest Office, Forest Range Office, near bus stop Wildlife Range, Srimangala, Tel: 08274-246331 Cell: 09611758153

Where to Stay

Inspection Bungalow (Tel: 08274-246331; Cell: 09611758153; Tariff: ₹1,500 + entry charges are applicable here) near Srimangala Range Forest Office, Srimangala

Permad (18km)

About 8km from Irpu is the Permad temple. Lord Rama's legendary arrow shot from Irpu landed here and became the spot where the *linga* that Hanuman brought from Kashi was consecrated. Rama further conceded that Hanuman's Shiva Temple at Permad would rank higher than the Ishwara Temple at Irpu. Even today during Mahashivratri, before the puja commences at Irpu, a puja is performed a day prior at Permad.

Glenlorna Tea Estate (Tel: 080-23570761; Cell: 09481610695; Tariff: ₹6,000-8,000+ breakfast) at Hudikeri

In a land known for coffee, it is astonishing to see vast swathes of tea plantation. Glenlorna is the only tea plantation in Kodagu with a 50-year-old bungalow run as a plantation stay by Tata Coffee's Ama Plantation Trails. With five sprawling rooms, the lone tea bungalow is located past Birunani and usually offered as a whole unit to groups (max 13 people). Activities include cycling, factory visit, tea picking,

nature walks etc. Many of the staff have worked here for decades. As per records, their forefathers came to these plantations in the 1890s from Tamil Nadu and Ceylon as labour for British planters. At Glenlorna, you can see third generation labourers who migrated from Sri Lanka, erstwhile Ceylon.

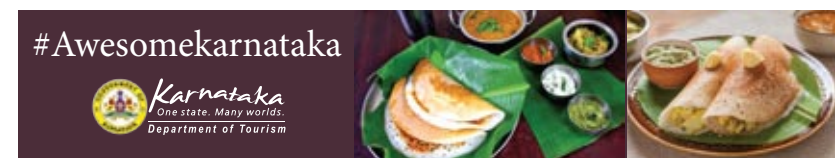
Mrityunjaya Temple Badagarakeri

A very unique Shiva shrine located at Badagarakeri (14km from T Shettigeri). The temple is very popular with locals. Shiva is worshipped here as Mrityunjaya or the 'One who conquered Death.'

It is said that the Churning of the Cosmic Ocean yielded the medicine god Dhanvantari, the goddess of wealth Lakshmi, Kalpavriksha, the Tree of Wishes, *amrita* (divine nectar), and other gifts. While the *devas* and *asuras* fought over the spoils, no one dared touch the vicious poison *halahala*. It was so toxic that even its fumes were lethal.

Lord Shiva drank the poison, which turned his throat blue and thus he earned the name Neelkanth (Blue-Throated One). Since Shiva had conquered certain death, he also came to be called Mrityunjaya. People come to this temple to pray for a long life.

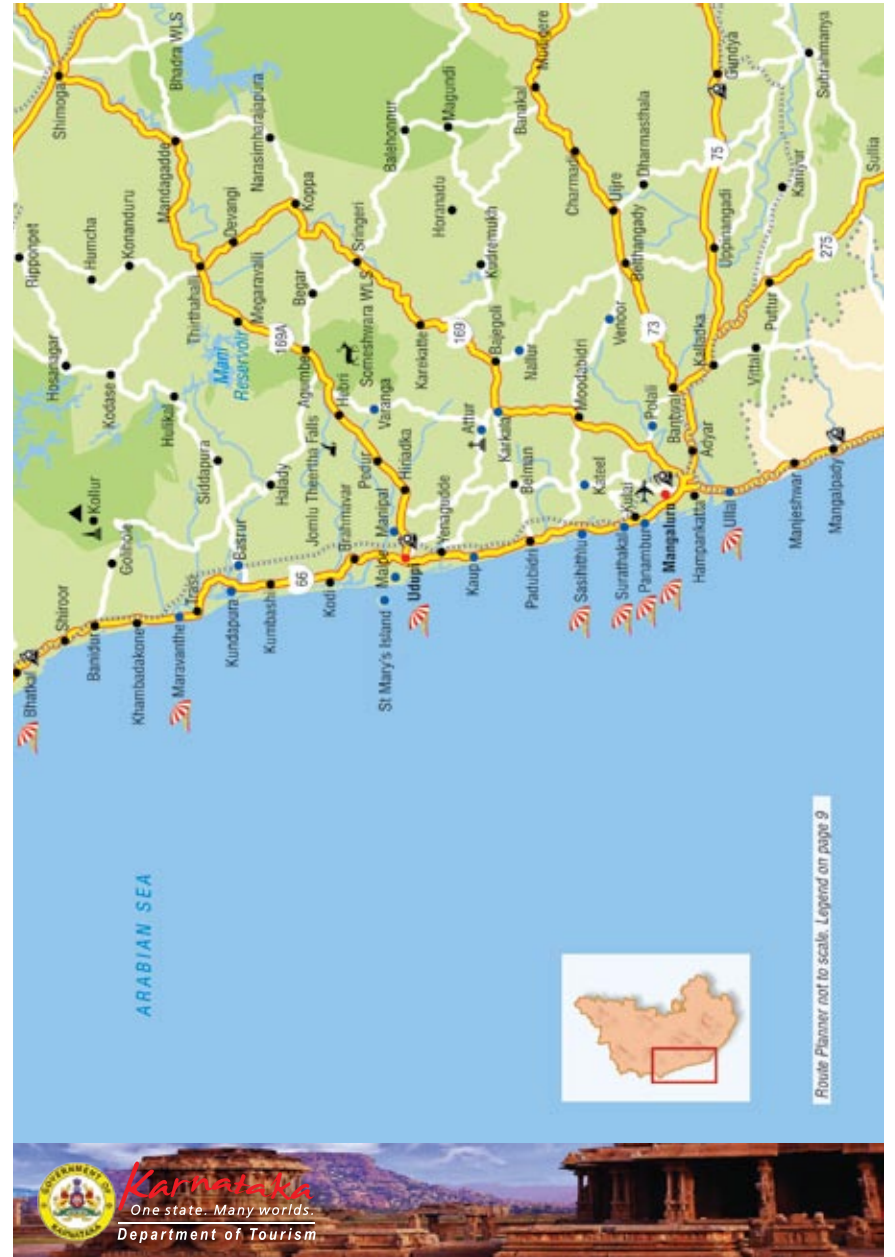
◆ **Puja timings** Starts at 10.30am ■



Coastal Karnataka

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PRASHANT PANJIAR

Mangaluru's beaches are great for spending leisure time with your loved ones

MANGALURU

COASTAL MONTAGE

■ BY ARCHANA RAI
WITH SAIRA MENEZES

You'd think that cosmopolitan cities are a thing of the 20th century, but Mangaluru might just prove you wrong. Caught between the salty kisses of the breeze from the Arabian Sea and tremulous with the fragrances from the biogeographical riches of the Western Ghats, back in the day this charming city was considered a cosmopolitan town as early as the 10th century.

Popular for its exquisite temples, flourishing industries and sunny beaches, you'll find while exploring that this charming city offers an appealing off-beat feel while

alternating between a relaxed coastal town ambience and the hectic pace of a 21st century urban landscape.

A coastal province, it has been split into two districts — Dakshina Kannada, with Mangaluru as its premier city, which is more 'Catholic' than any other in Karnataka; and Udupi, the seat of the Dvaita branch of Hinduism. The nearby town of Moodabidri hosts a rich tradition of Jainism, making this place a blend of faiths. Shaped by its coastal location and history as a major port town, the vibrant culture of the people of this city is amply highlighted through their different dance forms, handicrafts, cuisines, festivals as well as the rural sports. It

doesn't matter if you don't know any of the local languages, you'll discover that most of the Mangaluruans are quite friendly and will come forward to help you find your way around.

As can be observed in any other place in India, religion is deeply enmeshed with life in Mangaluru as well. For the pious, no amount of perspiration in this humid city will deter their resolve to pay homage at the multitudinous places of worship that this district offers.

The beautiful **Milagres Church** in downtown Hampankatta, built in 1680, was razed to the ground by Tipu Sultan in the 18th century. Though it was rebuilt, a hundred years later, the church collapsed due to structural reasons and was rebuilt and modelled, this time, along the lines of St. Peter's in Rome.

For those with more earthly impulses, the thought of the lip-smacking kane and bangude fry, or the pleasures of plunging tired bodies in the waters off lovely **Ullal Beach** are inducement enough. There are a string of restaurants serving seafood delicacies that are just other-worldly.

There are no prizes for guessing that it was the Jesuit priests in the 17th century who fashioned the ethos that still rule this quirky city on the Karavali Coast. Their influence is still visible to this day — scattered on the name-boards at the gates of tiled-roof bungalows on the city's hillsides; in the profusion of its venerable high-steepled churches that dot the cityscape; and

in the plethora of commercial establishments around town.

If you are doing the scenic thing and driving down to the coast, the waving coconut palms and the towering areca nut trees that frame lush green paddy fields are the first indication that the topography is about to change. That is, if you haven't already begun to feel the trickle of sweat down your spine.


As befitting a port city, what will strike you the most about Mangaluru is the veritable babble of languages that you hear all around you all the time — Tulu, Kannada, Konkani, English, even the odd snatches of Malayalam — all which commingle in the salty air to give Mangaluru its distinct sense of otherness.

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→ FAST FACTS

When to go September to February is the ideal time to head for the coast, when fish is plentiful, temperatures benign and the sea absolutely delightful. Summers are hot and humid.

Tourist Office

- Office of the Assistant Director 
- Department of Tourism
- Room No. 02, Commercial Complex,
- 1st Floor, Dakshina Kannada,
- Mangaluru
- Tel: 0824-2453926
- Cell: 08105472464 (DTC)
- STD code** 0824

ORIENTATION

Mangaluru is a budding conurbation that occupies around 132 sq km of picturesque space on the far end of the Karnataka Coast. It is the biggest city and railhead here and now features an international airport (18km away at Bajpe) as well. Connected to all major metros, the **railway station** is about a kilometre away from the city centre.

If you're coming by road, the city starts where the lush palm groves end near Kankanady. **Hampankatta** is the city centre, and a large number of commercial establishments are located here. The **KSRTC Bus Stand** is at **Bejai**, 3km north of Hampankatta. Local buses start from the State Bank, around 1½km south of Hampankatta.

A sculpture at Sri Mangaladevi Temple



Photographs by ANURAG MALLICK

The main beaches in Mangaluru are **Tannirubavi** (12km), **Panamur** (14km) and **Surathkal** (17km) to the north, and **Someshwar** (11km) to the south. **Ullal** is a small town that boasts the popular **Someshwar Beach**. For travel between the coastal towns, it is best to take a taxi; autos are convenient to move about in town. It's best to stay in Mangaluru and visit these beaches on a day trip. Only Ullal has a staying option in **Summer Sands Beach Resort** (see page 442).

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

Mangaluru, it is said, draws its name from the goddess Mangaladevi to whom a temple was raised by an ardent devotee, King Kundavarma, back in the 9th century. Religion dominates this society, whose economy is primarily agrarian. Exquisite temples like the Manjunatha, Mangaladevi, and Sharavu Ganapathi are a part of the religious circuit, as is the magnificent St. Aloysius College Chapel, with frescoes and oil paintings that Mangaluruans are happy to claim as rivalling those in the Sistine Chapel. Those with more secular pursuits in mind, however, need not despair — long stretches of pristine beaches, a golf course, and a variety of water sports are all available within 20km of Mangaluru city.

Mangaluru is big on beaches, many within easy reach of the city by a taxi ride. The stretches of sand and surf are marked by translucent waters shining under a clear blue



PRASHANT PANJIAR

Painted interiors of the beautiful St Aloysius College Chapel

sky. All the beaches have ubiquitous and grand signboards that warn swimmers about the dodgy sea. That doesn't stop Mangaluruans from enjoying them. Families flock to the beaches for some boisterous picnicking and take home snapshots, in which everyone is smiling, as souvenirs. In some ways, it seems as if Mangaluru has gone back to being a small town, having forgotten its intentions of being a snazzy city somewhere in the merrymaking of the evening. It's this heady combination of the old and the new that makes Mangaluru such a wonderful and popular destination.

Sri Mangaladevi Temple

This eponymous temple on the southern tip of Mangaluru city is fairly humming with myth and

legend. Built as a mark of piety by King Kundavarma on the advice of two Nepalese sages, this temple and the **Kadri Manjunatha Temple** are closely interlinked in the rituals and practices they perform. On the nine days of Navaratri or Dussehra in October, the Mangaladevi Temple comes alive in a grand celebration of the devi. The Swayamvara Parvathi puja in the temple is one that involves young girls doing a special fast and also receiving sanctified holy sandalwood paste from the priest after the ritual puja.

◆ **Timings** 6am-1pm, 4-8pm

St. Aloysius College Chapel

Located right in the centre of the city, on the campus of St. Aloysius College on Light House Hill Road, this chapel is, indeed, an architectural

Phalguni River Lodge

This Jungle Lodges resort, located just outside Mangaluru, is an excellent option for a back-to-nature sojourn. Though it is not by JLR tradition attached to anything resembling a national park or sanctuary, Phalguni River Lodge, overlooking the river nevertheless makes for an excellent exception to the rule. The USP of the lodge is its neighbour and inspiration — Pilikula Nisargadhama — a Karnataka state-promoted eco-education and tourism development project. Spread over 370 acres that's home to the Pilikula Lake and a stretch of tropical forest, Pilikula features a 165-acre biological park that harbours a snake house as well as over 65 species of free-ranging birds and tigers, lions, leopards, mouse deer, sloth bears, crocodiles, porcupines, wild boars and elephants in enclosures that resemble their natural habitat. There's also an arboretum, Science Park and a heritage centre. Back at the lodge, you have a choice of accommodation in comfortable AC rooms or suites.



gem. Built in 1900, it has a series of paintings that cover every inch of its roof and walls. Primarily frescoes painted upon lime-washed walls, the scenes depict the lives of saints ranging from St. Thomas to St. John De Britto. A labour of love by the Italian artist Brother Antonio Moscheni, these paintings also include oils on canvas that were extensively restored by INTACH.

♦ **Timings** Tuesdays to Sundays 9.30am-1.30pm; 3pm-5.30pm; Mondays 9am-12.30pm; 2-4pm. Visitors not allowed during the divine service **Camera** No photography and videography inside the Chapel. **Guided tours** For groups every 30 mins. **Contact** Cell: 09740908505 Mr Henry Pereira (Chapel Guide), Tel: 0824-2449749 **Chapel & Museum Tour fee** Indians ₹100, foreigners ₹150

Rosario Cathedral

The 'Mother Church' of the Mangalore Diocese and the city's oldest cathedral, dating back to 1568, was established by the Portuguese when they first landed in Mangaluru and set up a factory and godowns for storing spices here. Italian traveller Pietro delle Velle, who arrived in Mangaluru in 1623 refers to it as the Church of the Holy Rosary at Bolar, the other two being Our Lady of Mercy of Ullal and of St. Francis of Assisi at Farangipet. The royal stone insignia of the king of Portugal dating back to 1568 can be seen at the entrance, testifying to the changing fortunes and the enduring faith of the congregation.



The facade of Milagres Church is modelled on Rome's St Peter's Basilica

The cathedral, which was desecrated and destroyed by Tipu Sultan, was rebuilt by the British in 1813 and all those Christians who had survived Tipu's wrath and 15-year exile in Srirangapatna. The cathedral you see today stands on the site of the Portuguese-era 'Factory Church' of 1568. It was Fr Henry Buzzoni who was the driving force behind the rebuilding of the church in 1915.

Its more spacious structure replicated the lofty dome of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome and features beautiful stained glass windows, while the main altar of Jesus and Mary has been created with mosaic tiles. What is truly breathtaking, however, is an ornate wooden pulpit with images of the Evangelists and Mary and Jesus. The first Roman Catholic church in the Canara

region, it celebrated its centenary year in April 2015. On November 18, 2018, it celebrated 450 years of its hallowed site.

Milagres Church

Built in 1680, this church was razed by Tipu Sultan, who suspected the Catholics of Mangaluru of being secretly affiliated with his arch enemy, the British. Rebuilt in 1811, a decade after Tipu's death, it collapsed again a hundred years later. Rebuilt for the second time in 1911, its frontage is modelled on St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.

Kadri Manjunatha Temple

On the Kadri Hills within Mangaluru city, lies the Kadri Manjunatha Temple, dating back to 1068CE. Among the oldest Shiva temples in

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→ GETTING THERE

Air Mangaluru International Airport at Kenjar, Bajpe, is 18km/ 45 mins away; it is connected to several major airports, including Bengaluru, Chennai, Mumbai, and Hyderabad, among others by Air India, Indigo, and SpiceJet.

There is a 24hr pre-paid taxi counter at the airport and KSRTC offers bus services to the city as well.

Rail Mangaluru has two main railway stations: Mangaluru Central Railway Station on Old Kent Road, Hampankatta, and Mangaluru Junction Railway Station at Shantinagar, Padil, on the outskirts of the city. Taxis and autos are readily available at both. Bengaluru is connected by the Kannur Express. Trains for Delhi, Mumbai, and cities in Kerala and Tamil Nadu include Nizamuddin-Trivandrum Rajdhani Express, Mumbai CST-Mangaluru Junction Express, Malabar Express, and Mangaluru West Coast Express. Taxis and autos are readily available at both rail stations in Mangaluru.

Road From Bengaluru, take NH-75 via Neelamangla, Kunigal, Channarayaptna and Sakleshpur to Mangaluru (7-8 hrs). Taxis from Bengaluru to Mangaluru charge ₹8-20/km **Bus** KSRTC operates buses from Bengaluru and Mangaluru, starting from 6am, and there is also an overnighter; the main KSRTC stand in Mangaluru is at Bejai. The city is also serviced by Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh state buses.

peninsular India, it commemorates the legend of Parasurama, whose extreme penance pleased Shiva and who was taught the art of combat by Shiva himself. The caves atop Kadri Hill, on which the temple is situated, are popularly known as the caves of the Pandavas. The Padmasanastha Lokeshwara, a bronze statue within the temple, is among the oldest bronze sculptures in the country. Individual shrines to Durga and Ganesh flank the main temple. Statues of the Buddha and Lokeshwara adorn the Padmasanastha Temple as well.

Sharavu Maha Ganapathi Temple

In the heart of the city in Hampankatta on GS Road near the State Bank, this temple, dating back almost eight centuries, is both a pilgrimage and a cultural centre. It hosts performances of Yakshagana, the dance drama famous in the Canara region. There is no fee for seeing the Talamaddale performance, which is a narrated drama without costumed dancers. Revered as a deity of great power, Sharabeswara Maha Ganapathi is worshipped in an elaborate festival that marks Ganesh Chaturthi every year, as well as during the Car Festival that begins on Chandramana Ugadi day (the Kannadiga New Year) in April.

Lighthouse Hill Garden

If you're thirsting for some cool evening sea breeze after a sweltering day of devout genuflection, a drive up the Kadri Hills is just the ticket. The hills, with winding roads and



Sharavu Maha Ganapathi Temple is as much a culture hub as a place of worship

spectacular view of sunsets, make for a pleasant interlude. Drive down to the Lighthouse Hill Park for a look at snakes, deer, and many other fascinating animal friends. It will be a nice break for the children after a long, hot day.

Sulthan Battery

About 6km from Mangaluru city centre in Bolur, lie the ruins of an important 18th century watchtower built by Tipu Sultan near the scenic Gurpura river. Tipu, who ruled the area from 1782 to his death in 1799, followed on the heels of his father Hyder Ali in resisting British occupation in the Canara region. Built as a blockade to prevent enemy battalions attacking from boats on the Gurpura river, this watchtower is fashioned like a fort with spaces marked out to mount cannons.

Surfing Ashram

There's something about the wind in your hair, the smell of sea and the powerful thrill of riding a wave. The surfing ashram in Mangaluru is the perfect place if you want to learn the sport in a clean and encouraging environment. Situated in the coastal village of Mulki, the Ashram Surf Retreat offers activities like surfing, stand-up paddle, kayaking, bodyboarding, jet-ski, meditation, yoga and much more. Not quite your usual spiritual experience but would appeal to those who believe that nature is, indeed, the highest power. Their guest rooms offer a comfortable stay with a homely feel. You can surf year-round but the waves are in best form during the months of May-June and September-October. For an additional charge, you may also enjoy snorkelling in

the Arabian Sea. Friendly people, delicious food and free wi-fi are sure to make you want to return.

◆ **Contact** Mantra Surfing and Adventure Sports Centre, No. 6-64, Kolachi Kambala, Bappanadu, Mulki, Mangaluru; Cell: 09663141146; e-mail: surfsup@surfingindia.net; www.surfingindia.net/ ashram-surf-retreat

SHOPPING

The cashew tree in Mangaluru is as versatile as the coconut palm. A quick visit to **Fernandes Cashew Factory** and you are greeted by the fragrance of the nut. There's also the

Moode; Kadle usli



popular cashew drink — *kajucho sorro*, distilled quietly at home so, unfortunately, not freely available.

Lucky is the traveller who gets to sample this brew. Other absolute must-tries include macaroons from City Bakery, *gadbad* and *dilkhush* at Ideal Ice Cream Parlour, Mangaluru *halwa* from Komal Sweets in Hampankatta. Also take back some of Mangaluru's famous, smoky, dark date palm jaggery.

WHERE TO EAT

Seafood reigns supreme in this coastal town, and it should not come as a surprise that they're excellent at it. A trip to Mangaluru is incomplete without loading up on a lovely meal at any of the numerous restaurants that dot this charming city. The fresh morning catch is the ticket to heavenly gastronomic delights and one of the best places recommended is **Machali Restaurant**, which true to its name, serves the best of the rest when it comes to variety and innovation. Ask for their super special Prawn Ghee Roast. **Gajalee Seafood Restaurant** is another option and it is the local favourite. This hilltop restaurant is best known for its crispy batter-fried Bombay Duck, Tawa Fried Fish and prawn dishes.

A wide range of Mangaluru's many cuisines are on offer for sampling among its restaurants and eateries scattered across town. The **Pereira Hotel** opposite Government Law College serves authentic Catholic food, like sannas, pork



Bunt Cuisine

Just the food alone can be a good enough reason for a visit to the Karavali Coast. Drenched in coconut, spiced with locally grown cinnamon, *oora munchi* or red chilli, and with the unmistakable tang of tamarind — food cooked by the Bunt community epitomises coastal cuisine in all its glory. A lot of it is about meat and fish. As summer beckons, steamed rice dumplings are dipped into a mean clam curry cooked in a masala of coconut, mustard, fenugreek,

coriander and chillies to make *marvai pundi*. Fiery *bangada* curry, giant crab masala, dry prawn in coconut and tamarind and the *piece de resistance* of Bunt cuisine, *kane*, or lady-fish fry — are other seafood stars. *Gujje aajadhina* is the vegetarian version of a chicken curry spiced with fenugreek and coconut gratings. Ripe jackfruit lends itself to the Bunt delicacy, *pelakayida gatti*. The pulp is ground to a paste with coconut and rice and the batter steamed within the fragrant leaves of the teak tree. The delicate *gatti* is then eaten dipped in the richness of country chicken curry.

sorpotel, and fish curry rice. **Cardamom** at The Taj Gateway Hotel has a multi-cuisine menu. **Cellar**, located on KS Rao Road, has a bar and is another good option. For Continental, Chinese and Thai, head for **Hotel Moti Mahal** on Flanir Road. Also try **Hotel Ayodhya** for authentic vegetarian treats like *moode* and *gunda*. The speciality at **Oriental Flavours** (formerly Memories of Joanna) in Summer

Sands Beach Resort at Ullal are seafood and local dishes.

WHERE TO STAY

Mangaluru has ample staying options catering to various pockets. Advance bookings are necessary in peak tourist season, approximately September to June, especially if you are travelling in a large group and would like to stay in a particular

hotel. If you want to stay on the beachside, remember only a couple offer sea views.

The Taj Gateway Hotel (Tel: 0824-6660420; Tariff: ₹5,500-18,000 +breakfast; TE) overlooks the confluence of the Netravathi and Gurpura with the sea. Ask for rooms facing this stupendous sight. The Taj is Mangaluru's best hotel. Among the plusher options, **Ocean Pearl** (Tel: 2413800; Tariff: ₹7,000-7,499 +breakfast; TE) in Kodialbail is a pretty good choice. **The Verda Saffron** (Tel: 4255542, Cell: 09108025400; Tariff: ₹4,500-7,400 +breakfast; TE) is also centrally located and offers very decent mid-range accommodation. **Hotel Mangalore International** (Tel: 2444860-64; Tariff: ₹1,500-3,200

+breakfast), 5 mins from the railway station on KS Rao Road, has 45 rooms with room service and TV. **Hotel Navarathna Palace** (Tel: 2441104/08, 4261104; Tariff: ₹1,499-6,000 +breakfast; TE), 5 mins from the railway station, has 63 rooms, laundry, room service and TV, but no restaurant. **Poonja International** (Tel: 2440171-86, Cell: 09141955527; Tariff: ₹1,699-5,999 +breakfast; TE), also near the railway station, has 104 rooms, and a travel desk. **Hotel Srinivas** (Tel: 2440061; Tariff: ₹1,500-3,500 +breakfast; TE), with its 50 rooms, is located in the heart of town. **Hotel Woodlands** (Tel: 2443751-53; Tariff: ₹1,568-3,300) is on Bunts Hostel Road, and has 30 rooms and a restaurant.

One of the oldest resorts on the Karnataka coast, **Summer Sands Beach Resort** (Tel: 2467690-92; Reservations 08861373737; Tariff: ₹6,270-23,260 +breakfast, dinner) is an escape from the bustle of Mangaluru. The sea off Ullal Beach is not great for a swim but there's a pool in the 15-acre palm grove, plus spacious cottages.

For more hotels and details, see Mangaluru Accommodation Listings on pages 441-442

AROUNDS

Ullal (11km)

The Dargah in this beachtown is famous for its **Uroos Fair**, held every five years. Built in memory of the saint Madani, legend has it that he sailed to the Ullal coast on a



Worshippers at the Hazrat Madani Dargah at Ullal

piece of cloth from Saudi Arabia. Famed for its healing powers, this dargah, like others of its ilk, draws people from all faiths who descend in droves to observe the Uroos.

Also visit the **Rani Abbakka Fort**, built by a Jain queen, at Ranipura. Rani Abbakka is barely known outside Dakshina Kannada, but is a legend in these parts for both successfully rebelling against her husband, the Raja of Mangaluru, and retaining Ullal's independence; and also standing up to Portuguese rule. The queen landed quite a few crushing blows on the European invaders, before a massive Portuguese armada was sent to defeat her.

Tannirbhavi Beach (12km)

Abutting the New Mangaluru Port

Trust property is the Tannirbhavi Beach, a location for various barge-mounted power projects in the region. Not much frequented by the locals, this stretch of sand can provide you with a bit of splendid isolation; you'll have just the faraway silhouettes of cargo ships docking into the port for company.

Someshwar Beach, Ullal (13km)

Ullal, in south Mangaluru, has the most pristine and rocky beach face in the Canara region. Jagged rocks overlook the sea, which, however, most locals consider too rough for swimming. The great rock that abuts the sea is Someshwar's main draw, as are the series of resorts that line this picturesque stretch of sand and water. The Summer Sands Beach

Summer Sands, Ullal



SHUTTERSTOCK



Five-minute camel rides are among the attractions of Panambur Beach

Resort offers beach volleyball and boating trips to St. Mary's Isle. These are open to non-guests. Trips to St. Mary's Isle begin from Malpe Beach, 2 hrs from Mangaluru, and not from the resort.

Panambur Beach (14km)

Drive up NH17 and leave behind Mangaluru's chemical haze to be a part of the congregation on this city's most visited beach. As entering the water is risky, you'll have to make do with 5-minute-long camel rides here. You may, however, have to vacate the beach after sunset — there's a good chance that the police will otherwise chase you away. District authorities organise carnivals at Panambur, and the festivities include boat races, air shows and

sand sculpture contests. The beach is also a favourite venue for Team Mangaluru, which organises kite-flying festivals every summer.

Surathkal Beach (17km)

As you zip up NH17 towards Udupi, you'll pass Mangaluru's best-kept secret: Surathkal Beach, which must be rated as among the cleanest bits of coastline on the Karavali. With its lighthouse and close proximity to the National Institute of Technology, Karnataka, this is a favourite haunt of Mangaluru's hip crowd. But remember, swimming here can be dangerous, so ask the locals before you jump into the water. You can climb up the lighthouse here, built in 1972, or lounge on a few benches constructed on the rocks.

Sasihithlu Beach (22km)

White shores, less crowd and clean waters... what more can one want in a good beach? This little known gem, so close to the city, has it all. To reach here, start your journey from Sasihithlu Village and take the kutchra road passing amidst an acacia grove. If noisy places are not your thing, this beach is the perfect place to kick back and relax.

Adjacent to the scenic backwaters of Nandini and Shambhavi rivers, this lovely beach seems almost cut-off from the external world. The water is shallow and the waves gentle, hence making it the perfect spot to take children to. November to February is the best time to visit, although if you're a bit adventurous, you should visit from June-August during the monsoons.

Polali Raja Rajeshwari Temple (22km)

Yet another example of the dominant Devi cult that rules over the Canara region, the deity in this very ethnic of temples is a blazing red-coloured goddess. A lovely drive from Mangaluru through winding ghat roads, the Polali Temple plays host to an annual festival that culminates in a football match. Commemorating the devi's feat of annihilating the *asura* by stamping on his head, a

leather ball is offered to the deity through the week-long festival. On the final day, men drawn from the Bunt community square up against each other in a night match using the ball that has lain at the feet of the goddess for the past week. It is a tumultuous end to a week of colour, pomp and devotion.

Kateel (30km)

Kateel, which means 'waist of the river', lends its name to the famed Kateel Durga Parmeshwari Temple situated on a small island. About 50 years ago, the temple was a lonely spot, not terribly popular with devotees. The turnaround happened when a storm hit the area around 1944 and everything was washed away except the sanctum of the goddess.

Venur (36km)

Located on the Moodabidri-Belthangadi Road in Dakshina Kannada, this town is known for its 38ft tall Gomateshwara statue, installed on an elevated terrace on the south bank of the Gurpur river. Sculpted by Janakacharya, the statue was commissioned by the Jain ruler Veera Thimmana IV Ajila in 1604. The town also has eight *basadis* and the Mahadeva Temple. ■

Inputs by Parikshit Rao and Aroshi Handu

#Awesomerkarnataka





UDUPI

KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS

■ ANURAG MALLICK AND
PRIYA GANAPATHY

Located 60km north of Mangaluru, Udupi is considered the holiest of the seven *mukti sthalas* or sacred sites in coastal Karnataka. Blessed by Lord Shiva and sanctified by the great saint Madhavacharya, it is home to the famous Udupi Sri Krishna Temple. This is where Madhavacharya lived and taught 700 years ago and propounded the Dvaita philosophy

(principle of duality). He established the *ashta* mutts or eight Vaishnava monasteries and, over time, Udupi became the seat of Madhava renaissance and the Krishna Bhakti Movement. Few know that Udupi is also considered the birthplace of the *masala dosa*. Its origin is attributed to the need to feed the mass of pilgrims flocking into the temple town with something healthy, quick to cook, and substantial. Thus, spiced potato was added to a plain *dosa* and the *masala dosa* was born. Udupi became

The famous Sri Krishna Temple in Udupi

synonymous with Brahmin or *sattvik* vegetarian cuisine (sans onion and garlic) and soon, Udupi 'pure veg' restaurants, tiffin rooms, and cafés proliferated. Even today, thousands throng the Krishna Temple daily for a glimpse of the beautiful idol.

It is said that mother Devaki entreated Lord Krishna to show the childhood pranks that he played on his foster mother Yashoda. Krishna assumed his child-like form, broke the pots to steal butter and snatched away the churning rod and rope. Charmed by this infant form, Krishna's consort Rukmini got a statue of Bala Krishna crafted by the

celestial architect Vishwakarma. After Krishna's demise, the great archer Arjuna placed the statue in Rukmini Vana, where it got buried

Karnataka
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→ FAST FACTS

When to go Udupi is at its best during festivals like Holi, Janmashtami (Krishna's birth) and the biennial Paryayotsava. Held once in two years on January 18, the Paryayotsava marks the handing over of responsibilities to one of the heads of the eight mutts for a two-year turn. Special ceremonies, religious discourses, *rathotsava* and temple elephant processions take place during festivals. Across the year, Ramanavmi, Narasimha Jayanthi, Krishna Leelotsava, Ganesh Chaturthi, Anantha Chaturdashi, Subrahmanya Shashti, Vasantha Puja, Jagarana Seva, Thulasi Puja, Laksha Deepotsava, and Dhanu Puja are celebrated with great pomp in the temple. During Makar Sankranti, the harvest festival, ceremonies go on for eight days.

Tourist Office

● Office of the Assistant Director
Department of Tourism
Deputy Commissioner Office Complex,
Rajathadri, A-Block, 2nd Floor,
Manipal, Udupi
Tel: 0820-2574868 (AD)
Cell: 08762444986 (DTC)
STD code 0820

in mud. Centuries later, it was dug out as a lump of *gopichandan* (sacred yellow earth) and carried off unknowingly by sailors. As the ship sailed down the west coast, it was hit by a storm near Malpe; the sailors cried for help. Madhavacharya, who was meditating by the sea, waved his bark garment and the sailors managed to come ashore. In gratitude, they offered him any valuable item from their laden ship. Madhavacharya just asked for a lump of earth and that's how the idol resurfaced. He installed it in a temple and began worshipping it; the rituals instituted by him are unchanged to date. The place was called Udupi (from *udupa*, Sanskrit for boat), referring to the spot where

Statues on Sri Krishna Temple's spire



Lord Krishna came in a boat. The famous Car Street, where devotees draw the temple chariot during festivals, is the hub of all activity. While the 800-year-old Sri Krishna Temple is the star attraction, the older shrines of Anantheshwara and Chandramouleshwara stand like sentinels. Every ceremony at the Krishna Temple begins with a visit to these two temples.

Today, Udupi is no longer a small sleepy coastal town but a bustling hub on Karnataka's spiritual circuit. It serves as a good base to explore Jain sites like Karkala, Varanga, and Nallur in the hinterland, Manipal, Malpe and St. Mary's Island, besides Kundapura and Maravanthe further north on the coast.

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

Enter Car Street through Kanakadasa Road to the Sri Krishna Temple tower with Kanakana Kindi (Kanakadasa's window) below it. To the right is Kanakadasa Mantapa, beyond which is the Anantheshwara Temple in the middle of the complex, with the Chandramouleshwara (or Chandreswara) Temple located in front.

Sri Krishna Temple

A unique feature of this temple is that Lord Krishna is not worshipped directly but through a nine-holed window called Navagraha Kitiki. Dedicated to the nine planets, the silver-plated window is an exquisitely carved screen through which visitors view the idol of Krishna as a small boy, clutching a churning rod in his

Photographs by ANURAG MALLICK



The Sri Krishna Temple chariot is drawn by devotees on Car Street during festivals

right hand and a rope in the left, the only idol of its kind in India. The innocent expression of the idol is attractive. Next to it is the sacred fire lit by Sri Madhavacharya that has never been allowed to be extinguished. Legend has it that when Chaitanya Mahaprabhu came to Udupi, he lit a lamp from this one and took it to Vrindavan, where Krishna had spent his adolescence.

A slatted window grille behind the temple is called Kanakana Kindi, through which Krishna had revealed himself to his ardent devotee, Kanakadasa, a low-caste Kuruba who was not allowed to enter the temple. Undaunted, Kanakadasa went behind the temple and prayed to the Lord

through a tiny crack in the wall. Pleased by his devotion, Sri Krishna's statue is believed to have swivelled around to give him *darshan*. On the opposite side of Kanakana Kindi is Kanakadasa Mantapa, a domed structure housing his life-size statue. At the site of the original entrance stands a statue of Chenna Keshava. The entrance is opened only once a year on Vijaya Dashami. The trained temple elephant 'blesses' devotees with its trunk in return for coins and bananas. Krishna, considered as the Lord of fourteen worlds, is worshipped fourteen times a day with rituals extending from 4am to late night — ten services are carried out till noon and the remaining four in the evening hours.



Anantheshwara Temple

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→ GETTING THERE

Air Nearest airport: Bajpe Airport, Mangaluru (54km/1 hr). Taxi to Udupi costs ₹1,800-2,500, KSRTC Volvo bus fare: ₹95/ Regular bus: ₹50-70

Rail Udupi Railway Station is connected by direct trains like Rajdhani, Garib Rath, Sampark Kranti, Humsafar, Matsyagandha Express, etc to all the major cities on the Konkan Railway line. Rickshaw fare from railway station to the main town is ₹35-40

Road Udupi is well connected by road to Bengaluru, Mangaluru, Mysore (Mysuru), and other cities in Karnataka

Bus KSRTC buses ply regularly on these routes; KSRTC/private buses from Bengaluru (8-10hrs/ ₹424-1,032); from Mysuru (7-8hrs/ ₹550-650); from Mangaluru (1 hr/ ₹59-474) to Udupi

◆ **Sri Krishna Temple** Jagadguru Shri Madhwacharya Moola Mahasamstana, Car Street, Udupi
Timings 4am-9pm **Cell:** 08452040404, 09987123949, 09224 444455 **W** udipikrishnamutt.com

Anantheshwara Temple

Legend has it that a childless couple once prayed to Lord Shiva at the Anantheshwara or Ananthasana Temple and were blessed with a son, who grew up to be the 13th century philosopher-saint Madhavacharya. Ever since, childless couples come here for blessings. This was where Madhavacharya received his spiritual education and later expounded on the Dvaita philosophy. Lord Parasurama is worshipped in the form of a *linga* in this shrine and a 40ft tall *deepastambha* (lamp pillar) stands outside. Madhavacharya's birthplace Pajaka is 12km away where his foot impression is enshrined in a temple.

Chandramouleshwara Temple

Legend has it that Chandra the moon god undertook a penance here in the forest to redeem himself from a curse by Daksha Prajapati. Since Lord Shiva was worshipped by Chandra, the temple that sprung up around it was called Chandramouleshwara. The tiny entrance, surrounded by shops selling religious brassware, is easy to miss. The yellow-coloured, high-roofed structure houses a *swayambhu* (self-manifest) *linga* that changes colour thrice during the course of the day — black in the morning, blue at noon, and white at night!



Chandramouleshwara Temple, at the site where Shiva was worshipped by Chandra

Chandra Pushkarni, the temple tank where Lord Shiva had pardoned the Moon god, was later appropriated as Madhava Sarovar.

Madhava Sarovar

The sacred tank with green waters was initially part of the Chandramouleshwara Temple. After Madhavacharya gave the newfound idol of Lord Krishna a holy bath here, it came to be known as Madhava Sarovar. According to legend, when Madhavacharya was a little boy, he expressed a desire to visit Badrinath. His guru, being very fond of him, did not wish to be separated from his favourite disciple. So he prayed to the lord for a remedy, and an *akashvani* (divine voice) instructed him not to travel north, as Ganga herself would come south to visit him. A white stream of water sprang

forth in the southwest corner of the tank. Then onwards, it is believed that once every 12 years, the sacred Ganga flows into this tank to cleanse herself. Adjacent is a gau-shala or cow shelter maintained by the temple trust.

Ashta Mutts

The eight *maths* or mutts (religious centres) instituted by Madhavacharya can be found around Car Street — Kaniyooru Mutt, Sode Mutt, Puttige Mutt, Admar Mutt, Pejavar Mutt, Palimaru Mutt, Krishna Mutt, and Shirur Mutt. The mutts are appealing, with wide arches, large squares, and vernacular architecture. The management of the Krishna Temple is shared in a rotational term of two years by the mutts. During the biennial Paryaya Festival, officiating priests hand over responsibilities to

other pontiffs and the streets are full of devotees, processions, elephants, and fireworks. During festivities, pilgrims draw the golden, silver and bronze chariots parked nearby with great fervour.

SHOPPING

From Krishna statues to photographs of the Balamurali idol, vessels and brassware like *diyās*, bells and picture frames, the shops around Sri Krishna Temple sell a wide range of religious paraphernalia. Pick up cashew macaroons or malpuris from any

confectionery shop and an assortment of *halwas* made of *godī* (wheat), *badam* (almond) and *kushmand* (pumpkin), besides *holidays* from **Cinema Restaurant**, **Diana Restaurant**, and **Mitra Samaj**.

WHERE TO EAT

Mitra Samaj (Tel: 0820-2535600) was started in 1949 by Nittur Gopal Holla as a small tea shop sharing a wall with the Chandramouleshwara Temple. The last of the original Udupi restaurants, even now, no garlic and onion is used in the veg

Udupi annadana and the masala dosa

It is widely believed that the world's favourite South Indian dish – the *masala dosa* – was created at Sri Krishna Temple in Udupi. For centuries, the temple has followed the tradition of *annadana* or feeding devotees *sattvik* pure veg cuisine cooked by Brahmins. But none anticipated the massive inflow of pilgrims. Cooking a meal of rice, lentils, and vegetables for such huge numbers became cumbersome. An urgent innovation was needed. A temple priest suggested that a potato filling, sans onion or garlic, be added to the simple *dosa*. As news of the *masala dosa* spread, so did the small eateries that promoted it. Tiny Udupi cafés, with their staple fare of *dosa*, *idli*, *vada*, *uppitu* and *puri palya*, spilled out of the temple town and across India. Yet, Udupi cuisine has much more to offer – pumpkins, gourds, jackfruit, colocasia leaves, raw bananas, mango pickle, *sambar* with ground coconut, *rasam*, *adyes* (dumplings),



PRASHANT PANJARI

ajadinas (dry fry) and *chutneys*. It marked the beginning of the tiffin-room culture in south India and spawned a chain of Udupi cafés across the country and beyond. Everywhere, brand 'Udupi' is built on three pillars: hygiene, taste, affordability.



A lot of bananas from the Udupi market go to the temple elephant during festivals

food here. Try *goli bajji*, *uppitu* (upma), bullet *idli*, Mangaluru buns, biscuit roti, *parota* with *kurma*, pineapple *shira* and the massive Outlook *dosa* (Thursday closed). They also run **Mitra Café** adjoining the Mitra Hospital on the Old Post Office Road. The iconic **Diana Restaurant** (Tel: 0820-2520505; Cell: 09448132202) is the birthplace of the legendary 'gadbad' ice-cream and serves a good range of local snacks and *halwas*.

For a wider variety of authentic Udupi fare, check out **New Cinema Restaurant** in Mythri Complex and **Woodlands Restaurant** (Tel: 0820-2522807). **Hotel Arya** in Koteswar on NH-17 is known for its *mentya dosa*. **Ramakrishna Hotel** (Tel: 0820-2523189-93) on Geetanjali Road has two restaurants, Amantran and LX Brasserie, that serve multi-cuisine

dishes. Try the famous fish meals with anjal fry at **Hotel Thimmappa** in Adiudupi.

WHERE TO STAY

Udupi has several pilgrim lodges, chowtries (resting places), and guesthouses run by different mutts and temple authorities. Geetha Bhavan, Birla Chowltry, Sri Krishna Dhama, Admar Mutt Chowltry, Sri Venkatramana Temple Guest House, Puttige Mutt, and Pejavar Mutt's Adhokshaja Mandir are some basic options, besides city hotels and lodges. Manipal nearby has better hotels with more luxurious beach resorts at Malpe and Kundapura.

Samanvay Boutique Hotel (Tel: 0820-2500250, Cell: 09448011111; Tariff: ₹4,366-6,000; TE) near Govinda Kalyana Mantapa,

SHUTTERSTOCK



History, architecture, and artefacts come together in this recreated 7-acre village

Hasta Shilpa Heritage Village Museum

Sometime in the 1970s, the sight of an antique pillar being used as firewood disturbed banker Vijaynath Shenoy so much that he bought the piece and dedicated his life to conserving the endangered architectural heritage of the region. The result was Hasta Shilpa, a trust established with the patronage of the Pai family, besides Finnish and Norwegian aid, to preserve the rich legacy of Dakshina Kannada. It brings together history, architecture and artefacts in a recreated heritage village, with 26 traditional homes artfully restored. Rare heritage structures on the verge of being demolished were acquired by the trust and transplanted into the 7-acre complex in Manipal. Among the oldest structures is the 700-year-old Jangama Mutt of Puchchamogaru. The three-century-old Sringeri House was built as per Vedic traditions, and the Vidyamandira was the residence of the pontiff of Ramachandrapura Mutt in Shimoga. You will find a Mangalore Christian House, the regal Mudhol Palace

Durbar Hall, a trading house-cum-residence called Hungarcutta Bansale mane, the Byndoor-Nelyadi house, the Belgaum Peshwada, a British Cantonment home from Bangalore (Bengaluru) with terracotta tiles depicting Queen Anne on the façade, and a 250-year-old Vaderhobli House of the Koni Karanths of Kundapur. Each structure is unique. Kunjur Chowkimane, a 'courtyard house' of Shivalli Brahmins from Udupi, dating back to early 19th century, is built in the architectural style of Kerala based on the 15th century treatise Manushyalaya Chandrika. Bhatkal Navayath Muslim House, a 200-year-old mansion from Bhatkal, has no conspicuous veranda; tinted glass and slatted windows with tiny vents protected the privacy of a conservative Muslim home. Each of the richly carved wooden pillars is unique with sterling brass work on the doors. Harkur Olaginamane, literally, 'interior house', was built 400 years ago for a Harkur Bunt family. Its spindle-shaped pillars are inspired by the

maddale or *mridangam*, an essential musical accompaniment in Yakshagana performances. The glittering pride of the Deccani Sultans of Bidar, the Humnabad Nawab Mahal, is a late 19th century structure with coloured, glazed tiles, Belgian glass and lamps, exquisite Austrian chandeliers, a spiral, cast-iron ladder from Birmingham and beautiful Bidriware. The highlight is the Vijayanagara Kamal Mahal of Kukanoor, believed to be the only surviving wooden structure of the famed Vijayanagara Empire. Built by the military governor during the reign of Harihara II, it served as the residence of the army commander or Dandanayaka. The home is named after the lotus frieze motif in the ceiling framed by bulbous pendants. A large hall houses a big cache of *bhootas*, family deities, pre-Vedic pagan gods and outlandish animal figurines. There is a 300-year-old vessel of bell metal where curd or buttermilk stays fresh for a week and containers where rice could stay fresh for five years! Visitors can explore the open-air museum through two tours. **Southern Stroll** is ideal for first-time visitors and the elderly, while the **Eastern Jaunt** was opened in 2018.

◆ **Address** Alevoor Road, Opp Hotel Lake View, Manipal
Tel: 0820-2574577; Cell:09845229701
Email hastashilpatrust@gmail.com
www.indiaheritagevillage.org

Tours Southern Stroll (1½ hrs): Wed/Fri/Sun; Eastern Jaunt (1½ hrs): Tues/Thurs/Sat
Timings 11:30 am, 2 pm, 4 pm (Oct-May); Monsoon Walk (1 hr): 10am, 11.30am, 2.30pm, 4pm (June-Sept) (Mondays closed)

Ticket ₹300 pp/ ₹500 pp for both tours (senior citizen and students 50% off).
Monsoon Walk ₹200 pp

Kinnimulki Main Road, is the only 5-star hotel in Udupi; the new boutique property is cut off from the town's bustle. It has 48 rooms with luxurious linen, housekeeping service twice daily, large work desk, bathtub with walk-in shower and luxurious bathroom amenities. There are two vegetarian restaurants, an MTR outlet outside, a coffee shop, yoga studio, foot reflexology by FootWorks and complimentary breakfast. The 3-star **Hotel Sharada International** (Tel: 0820-2521968, 2522910; Tariff: ₹1,500-4,500; TE) located on NH-17, Adi Udupi, Bannanje, offers 42 rooms with room service and Internet; it also has two multi-cuisine restaurants with a bar. **Hotel Sri Ram Residency** (Tel: 0820-2530761; Cell: 09035446019; Tariff: ₹1,500-4,500; TE) near the Head Post Office Road, Thenkpete, is a 2-star hotel in the heart of town with TV and telephone in rooms with views of the city and the sea from the rooms on the upper floors. The tariff includes complimentary breakfast.

Hotel Kediyoor (Tel: 0820-2508222, 2522381; Tariff: ₹1,500-7,000; TE) near Service Bus Stand, Shribeedu, is a landmark hotel with 38 rooms and offers room service, Internet and same-day laundry. The Gokul Krishna veg restaurant serves Udupi cuisine and the Gazebo Restaurant offers non-veg fare; the Kediyoor Confectionery has freshly made cakes and sweets. **Trebo Vijaya Grand** (Tel: 0820-2531141; Tariff: ₹1,800-4,200; TE) located on Old Post Office Road, opposite

Kalpana Theatre, Diana Circle, is a budget hotel with 30 air-conditioned rooms; it has no in-house restaurant, so breakfast has to be ordered in.

For more, see *Udupi Accommodation Listings on pages 45-446*.

AROUNDS

Manipal (8km)

Manipal is to education what Udupi is to vegetarian food. The small university town revolves around the institutes established by the Manipal Group, founded by the late Dr TMA Pai, a doctor, banker, visionary, and philanthropist. From the first institute Kasturba Medical College in 1953, today the Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE) runs over two dozen professional colleges where lakhs of students pursue academics. A vibrant young town,

An Indian meal at a Manipal restaurant



the 600-acre campus has well laid out roads, towering college buildings, hospitals, hotels and cafés. The town's chief landmark is Tiger Circle, named after the big cats that used to roam here once. **Smrithi Bhawan** (9.30am-1pm, 2.30pm-6pm, closed on Sundays), the house where Dr TMA Pai lived from 1898 to 1979, is now a museum dedicated to his life and achievements, documented through photos, awards and accolades. Don't miss the scale model of the township, which gives a bird's eye view of Manipal. Beyond Syndicate Bank building is **Dr TMA Pai Planetarium**, (Tel: 0820-2571922) with 69 seats and four daily shows on the solar system (English 10.30am/ 2.30pm, Kannada 11.30am/3.30pm, Tuesday holiday). Special shows are conducted between 2pm and 3pm for groups of 50 or more. Further down the planetarium, within the Manipal Institute of Technology campus, lies the **Venugopala Temple**. Built in 1973, it fuses architecture of three faiths — the sanctum is like a Hindu shrine and houses a statue of Krishna playing the flute; the large dome and mosaic flooring are Islamic; while the tall bell tower is typical of Christian churches. In front of the temple is **Brindavan Garden**, a well-maintained park with a sculpture of two large elephants at the entrance. The Basic Sciences building across Tiger Circle has an **Anatomy Museum** (Tel: 0820-2922081; 8am-5.30pm) and adjacent is the **Pathology Museum** (8am-5.30pm). Beyond the MAHE complex, drive



The fishing centre of Malpe caters to the appetite of fish-lovers across Karnataka

2km to a dead end at the edge of a high plateau to **End Point**, which offers a view of the **Swarna river** meandering below and amazing sunsets. On Udupi Road, **Govind Pai Samshodhana Kendra** Tel: 0820-2521159, Cell: 09902710092 (9am-5pm, Saturday ½ day/ Sunday closed) at MGM College Campus boasts a huge collection of books on history and Indology accumulated by Rashtrakavi Govind Pai. Within the same complex is the **Regional Resources Centre for Folk Performing Arts** with a gallery of wooden artefacts and statues in copper and brass. Outside are a few stone images and inscriptions. Manipal's star attraction is **Hasta Shilpa Heritage Village Museum**. **Anupam Restaurant** (Cell: 09448355249, 09916823246 opposite KMC), **Manipal Restaurant** (Cell: 09980641064) and **Manipal Canteen**

(Cell: 09844736230) on the Main Road serve multi-cuisine dishes and tasty snacks.

In **Manipal** head for **Country Inn & Suites by Radisson** (Tel: 0820-2701600; Tariff: ₹3,800-15,000; TE) located on Rajathadri Road, Vidharathna, KA Nagar. A casual 4-star hotel, it offers 54 rooms, an outdoor infinity pool, spa, business centre, fitness centre.

Malpe (6km)

Situated at the mouth of the Udyavara river, Malpe is an important fishing centre with a picturesque beach and a natural harbour. At the busy fishing pier, an assortment of bangda (mackerel), kane (lady fish), prawns, shrimp, sharks and crabs are unloaded from a battery of boats. Fisherwomen carry the baskets to gigantic scales where they are weighed and then loaded onto waiting trucks, packed

with crushed ice. Almost single-handedly, Malpe sates the appetite of thousands of fish-lovers across Karnataka. Malpe has a long, crescent-shaped natural beach hemmed in by groves of casuarinas and a scenic 'marine drive' where pushcarts sell *bhelpuri*, ice cream and sugarcane juice. The lush St. Mary's Island is a speck to the right and a jagged chain of rocks can be seen on the left. Across the bay lies the island of Daria Bahadurgarh with the Balrama temple and Malpe's oldest tile factory set up by the Basel Mission.

In Malpe your best bet is the **Paradise Isle Beach Resort** (Cell: 07847800800; Tariff: ₹3,500-7,000; TE) located on Malpe Beach, 6km from Udupi. It offers 72 rooms, separate vegetarian and non-veg restaurants, a bar, coffee shop, speciality seafood restaurant,

Paradise Isle Beach Resort



Ayurvedic spa with aromatherapy, along with water sports and adventure activities. The **Paradise Lagoon** (Cell: 07847800800; Tariff: ₹4,000-6,700; TE) at Kemmanu Hoode, is a lovely beach, backwater and houseboat resort.

St. Mary's Island (12km)

Located 6km into the Arabian Sea, a 30-minute boat ride from Malpe harbour leads to the palm-fringed St. Mary's Island. Locals also call it Coconut Island. Because of the rocky approach, passengers are transferred to a shallower boat and taken ashore. Legend has it that before making his official landing on the Indian mainland at Kappad beach near Kozhikode in 1498, the Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama dropped anchor here at the northern-most island, Tonse Par. He erected a holy cross to commemorate the historic landing and christened the island 'El Padron de Santa Maria'. Over time, it became known as St. Mary's Island.

The 300m long, 100m wide island is composed of volcanic hexagonal basalt rock formations in dramatic shades of red and black, contrasting against the turquoise-blue Arabian Sea. On account of its geological and ecological importance, St. Mary's Island was declared a National Geological Monument.

♦ **Ferry timings** to St. Mary's Island (5km/20min) 8am-5pm **Tickets** ₹300/400pp (return). **NOTE** On holidays, the island boat leaves only when it is full (15-20 pax); on weekdays, timings are 10.30am and 3.30pm. Boats can also be chartered

SHUTTERSTOCK



View of the beach landscape from the Kaup lighthouse, which was built in 1901

from the Malpe Development Committee (Tel: 0820-2538779).

Kaup (14km)

Kaup is famous for its beautiful beach, the shrine of Hosa Mariamma and the century-old lighthouse on a rocky promontory jutting into the sea. A narrow walkway through a shaded stretch of palm leads to the beach with a few shops and eateries. Built by the British in 1901, the black-and-white-striped 130ft lighthouse throws a beam of light that can be seen 26 nautical miles away. Four long flights of steps give access to the light on the fifth floor. The 200-year-old temple of Hosa Mariamma, built like a traditional home, houses the bronze statue of the Kaup's guardian deity, the tribal goddess Mariamma. The beach has

veg cafés as well as shacks selling fish curry-rice and kane fry. The aggressive crows are quick to snatch fish from the plates of unsuspecting tourists. The beach looks beguilingly serene but has strong undercurrents.

In Kaup try the **Palm Grove Resort** (Tel: 0820-2551505, 2579505; Cell: 07406722269; Tariff: ₹2,000-2,500; TE) located near Yermal Beach. It has 13 rooms. There's no restaurant but food can be ordered in from nearby eateries; the complimentary breakfast is basic (usually *neer dosa-chutney*) served in a dining hall. There's a common room with TV, children's park, indoor games, and landscaped lawns. With the quiet pristine beach nearby, one can walk along serene the coastal road lined with an abundance of coconut groves.

Kundapura (38km)

Best known for its eponymous dish Kundapur Chicken, the ancient town is tucked away between the Arabian Sea and the Panchagangavalli river. The Panchakanya or five rivers — Kubja, Khedaka, Varahi, Souparnika, Chakra — join as Panchagangavalli at Gangolli. Legend has it that Kundavarma built the **Kundeshwara temple** on the banks of the river and the town that came up around it was called Kundapura. Some attribute the name to *kunda* (jasmine), from the abundance of jasmine trees here, or to *kunda* (pillar), referring to the traditional way of building houses.

Kundapura was the principal port of the Rajas of Baindoor who took control of it after the decline of the Vijayanagara Empire. The Portuguese

settled here in the 16th century and built a fort. Army commander Hyder Ali constructed a redoubt at the entrance to the river. His son Tipu Sultan built a freshwater tank near town to breed a particular type of fish for his personal consumption. After Tipu's death in 1799, the British took over the town and anglicised it to 'Coondapur'. While in town, see the **Sachidanand Dattatreya Temple**, old mutts with traditional architecture, and visit the beaches of Kodi, Koradi, and Bijadi, besides the scenic bridge at Gangolli. Kundapura is also a great centre of Badagathittu, the northern style of Yakshagana, the traditional folk dance-drama of Karnataka. **Soans Holidays** at Grace Villa on CS Road (Tel: 08254-231683, Cell: 09448120826) are the local authority on Kundapura and organise camping, cycling, birdwatching, jeep tours, and trekking to more than 25 waterfalls in the area. **Shetty Lunch Home** near Kundapura bus stand is famous for its Chicken Ghee Roast and Kundapur Chicken.

In **Kundapura** check out **UVA Meridian Bay Resort & Spa** (Cell: 09449606060, 09483303030; Tariff: ₹3,000-8,000; TE), a hidden gem near Koteswar just short of town; this sprawling upscale resort is set on a 33-acre campus about 6.5km from Kodi Beach. It has 49 spacious rooms with a complimentary breakfast service.

For a detox holiday (no alcohol, no non-veg), look no further than **Balkatmane Homestay Ayurvedic Retreat** (Cell: 08861302296; Tariff: ₹10,000 with meals; TE), a quiet

Shetty Lunch Home has famous dishes

Sachidanand Dattatreya Temple showcases traditional low-key architecture

property set on 5 acres with eight rooms (four on each floor) in a heritage home.

Basrur (41km)

Located on the banks of the Varahi river, Basrur was once a key port town on the Canara coast. Originally Vasupura, it was called 'Bares' in Ptolemy's chronicles, 'Abu Sarur' by Ibn Batuta, and 'Barcelor' by the British. It prospered as the area's premier rice port in the 16th and 17th centuries and the town's streets housed various communities — traders, artisans, weavers, dancers, and singers. The Mahalingeshwara Temple was built by the ancient South Indian merchant guild Nakhara and is hence also called Nakhreshwar Temple. The annual chariot festival is held in April. The

town has several temples like the Sri Mahalasa Narayani Temple, sacred to the Gaud Saraswat Brahmin community. Dr Sivaram Karanth's 1970 Kannada novel *Mai Managala Suliyalli* is set in Basrur and depicts its rustic charms. Stay at Soans Island while you explore the town.

In **Basrur** head for the ever-popular **Soans Island** (Tel: 08254-231683; Cell: 09448120826; Tariff: ₹6,000 with 2 meals and a boat trip; TE). This private island resort is run by Vishwas and Lavinia Soans on a 750m strip of land at the mouth of the Varahi river, about 6km south of Kundapura.

Maravanthe (54km)

NH-17 cleaves through Maravanthe with the Arabian Sea on one side, the Souparnika river on the other, and

the rolling Kodachadri Hills in the distance. Tourist facilities are limited but it's a scenic patch of rivers, bridges, sprawling cashew and coconut plantations and orchards of jackfruit and mango. Apart from a great photo-op, Maravanthe offers spectacular sunsets. Watch fishermen bring in the catch at Trasi and take a ride in a country boat on the backwaters of the Souparnika river. For a longer jaunt, take a boat ride to Lighthouse Island, 5km (30 minutes) into the sea, or to Coral Island for snorkelling between October-end and April.

In Trasi/Maravanthe the **Sunlight Beach Resort** (Cell: 09880346029; Tariff: ₹2,300; TE) comes well recommended for its excellent location right opposite the

Inside a Jain basadi in Karkala



PRASHANT PANJIAR

beach, with 11 spacious rooms that come with balcony and a good sea view. There's no restaurant — food can be ordered from nearby eateries. The **Sagar Kinara Beach Resort** (Cell: 09448724861, 09886884046; Tariff: ₹800-1,000; TE) offers six simple rooms, 1km short of Maravanthe. Run by Srinivasa Avabratha and family, it has no restaurant but food can be ordered from nearby joints.

Karkala (40km)

An important Jain pilgrimage centre, Karkala is believed to have got its name from the *kari kal* or black granite stone found in the area, used to fashion temples and idols out of it. From 6th century onwards, Karkala served as a base for the Alupas — feudatories of the Kadambas — who ruled the kingdom of Tulunad for nearly 800 years. King Bhairarasa made Karkala his capital and, as Jainism flourished, many *basadis* (Jain temples/shrines) and a Bahubali statue were built. The town's main avenue Ananthashayana or AS Road is named after the 700-year-old stone temple dedicated to **Anantha-padmanabha Swamy**. Diagonally opposite is the small shrine of the goddess Padmavathi. About half a kilometre away and a few steps up a hill, lies **Chaturmukha Basadi** 10am-2pm, 4pm-6pm), named so because it has four entrances. Built in 1856 by King Bhairarasa II, it is referred to as Tribhuvana Thilaka Jina Chaityalaya and Ratnaraya Dhama in scriptures. A huge stone structure with high ceilings, it is



Between the Souparnika river and the turquoise blue Arabian Sea

supported by 32 pillars with black stone images of Aranatha, Mallinatha, and Munisuvrathanatha in the sanctum. The eastern side, where the daily worship takes place, has small images of 24 *tirthankaras*. Half a kilometre south of the *basadi* leads to Bahubali hill. Halfway up the steep steps is the simple **Parshwanatha-Padmavathi Basadi**. Dominating the summit is the imposing Bahubali statue (open 8.30am-7pm), also accessible by road from the back of the hill. At 42ft, this is the tallest Bahubali (aka Gomateshwara) sculpture after the gigantic one in Shravanabelagola and was built in 1432 during the reign of Veerapandya Bhairarasa. A square enclosure surrounds the statue and facing it is the *manasthambha*, a carved stone pillar. On the right side of the courtyard is the *yajnashtala mantapa* where rituals are held. The entrance

is flanked by the shrines of Chintamani Parshwanatha on the right and Sheetalnatha on the left. Outside is another tall stone pillar with the image of a seated *yaksha* on top. Though the hillock is only 300ft above sea level, it offers panoramic views of fields, **Ramasamudra Lake** and lush vegetation to the east. Just off AS road, to the west, are other shrines like **Ucchangi Mariamma Temple** and **Shri Venkataramana Temple** that enshrines a small *panchaloha* idol. Across the road is the **Anjaneya Temple** with a tall statue of Hanuman smeared with vermilion. A day trip from Udupi is enough to cover Karkala.

In Karkala you'll find some basic but clean accommodation facilities, at **Hotel Suhag** (Tel: 08258-231991/2; Tariff: ₹800-1,400) located in the Gopal Towers Complex, Main Road, near the Indian Overseas Bank



Kere Basadi, the Jain temple that sits in the middle of a lake in Varanga

with standard and AC rooms, a vegetarian restaurant and shopping. **Hotel Prakash** (Tel: 08258-234981/2, Cell: 09632826562; Tariff: ₹800-1,962) is a budget hotel near Ananthapadmanabha Swamy Temple, offering 12 standard rooms with cable TV and phone, multi-cuisine restaurant and parking.

Jomlu Theertha Falls (40km)

The Sitha river flows through pristine jungle and falls in a 20ft cascade. Though the cluster of falls is not big, it's a scenic location, with patches of black rocky outcrops lending a rich contrast to the surrounding forest. To reach the falls, one must cross a stream, carefully stepping over slippery stones. The force of the water beating down has carved some holes in the rock, creating rocky pools with several points that are

safe to bathe. Forest hikes should be done only with a local guide, available at the nearest village Santhekatte or Nalkur near Hebri. Carry food and water with you, as there are no facilities.

St. Lawrence Basilica, Attur (41km)

Within a stone's throw from Karkala stands the historic St. Lawrence Church of Attur. Records state that there was an older church 7km away dating back to 1759, which was destroyed by Tipu Sultan, and local Christians were taken as captives to Srirangapatna. After Tipu's death in 1799, the freed captives returned to build a thatched roof church in 1801. As the faithful flocked to the shrine, a bigger church was needed. Led by a Goan priest, the parish members set forth with a 1ft wooden

statue to look for a site. Legend has it that as they reached Attur at the base of the Parpare Hill, they put the idol on the ground to quench their thirst at a spring. The statue took root and refused to budge. Taking it as divine will, a church was built in 1839 and replaced by the current one in 1900. Set amidst gentle hills, the church has a holy pond, Pushkarani, behind the 100ft bell tower. The Parpare Hill has caves used by Tipu Sultan. The annual Attur Jatre (festival) in January-end draws people of all faiths. Special prayers are held every Thursday at 10am. Take the Karkala-Agumbe Road till the arched entrance on the left from where Attur Church is 2km away. Buses from Karkala to Moodabelle stop here. Tel: 08258-298232, 230322; Cell: 08762033222, 08746033222 www.stlawrenceattur.org

Varanga (50km)

The handful of *basadis*, a mutt, and the scenic lake make Varanga a must-visit for followers of the Jain faith and an interesting detour for offbeat travellers. Next to a huge field and parking lot is the 1,000-year-old **Neminatha Basadi**, with a lofty *dhwajastambha* and *manastambha* pillars in the adjacent enclosure. About 200ft away is the main mutt and the **Chandranatha Swamy Basadi** with an image of Padmavathi

Devi. To the east lies a lovely lake in the middle of which sits a conical-roofed shrine called **Kere Basadi**. The temple priest ferries visitors in a rowboat. Though the main deity is Parshwanatha, it also has idols of Ananthanatha, Neminatha, and Shantinatha. The lake is full of fish and you can feed them puffed rice or bread. The picturesque surroundings and quiet atmosphere make Varanga an appealing getaway. Its *basadis* come under Swasthishri Devendra Keerthi Swamiji of Hombuja Mutt in Shimoga district.

Nallur (58km)

Nallur is a nondescript village known for its beautiful Digamber Jain temple dedicated to Lord Parshwanatha. Set in a walled compound amid a maze of buildings, the sanctum stands on a platform housing the 5ft image of Parshwanatha and Kushmandini Devi in front. It is said that if a flower decorating the idol falls down while a devotee prays, one's wish will come true. Don't miss the rare depiction of Samosharanam on the first floor, a symbolic representation of heaven with seven doors, with miniature stone figures of humans and animals on their path to salvation.

◆ **Puja timings** Daily 10.30am; Special pujas are carried out on Tuesdays from 10am-1pm ■





PRASHANT PANJIAR

A load of fish on its way to delicious transformation in Karavalli kitchens

MURDESHWAR

SHIVA BY THE SEA

■ ANURAG MALICK AND
PRIYA GANAPATHY

Located 127 km north of Mangaluru, between Bhatkal (14 km) and Honnavar (26 km), Murdeshwar used to be a lonely seaside hillock with an ancient Shiva temple, until recently. Legend has it that once Ravana undertook a penance to appease Lord Shiva and wished to take his embodiment, the *atmalinga*, to Lanka. Lord Shiva agreed on the condition that the *linga* should not to be kept on the ground. As Ravana neared Gokarna, Lord Ganesha appeared before him

disguised as a Brahmin boy and offered to hold the Shiva *linga* while Ravana performed his evening prayers. Ganesha placed the *linga* on the ground where it took root and was enshrined at Gokarna as Mahabaleshwar. A furious Ravana tried to move it in vain and flung the case of the *linga*, which fell 23 miles north at Samputeshwar or Shejeshwar. The lid allegedly landed 27 miles south at Guneshwar or Gunavante, the thread fell south at Dhareshwar and Ravana trampled on the sacred cloth that wrapped the *linga* and hurled it 32 miles south to

Kandukagiri hill. The act of trampling in mud — *mrida* is ‘muddy’ in Sanskrit — led to the place being called ‘Mrideshwara’; over time it became Murdeshwar (also spelt Murudeshwara).

When Lord Shiva learnt about the incident from the wind god Vayu, he came down to earth with Parvati and his retinue. He visited these five spots and sanctified them as *pancha-kshetras* (five holy places). It is believed that those who worshipped them would be liberated from all sins. According to legend, when Shiva came to Murudeshwar he saw himself in the *linga*. Pleased, he summoned all the gods and blessed the place. Some believe it was from this state of *mrid* (happiness) that the place was called Mrideshwar. Since the *linga* didn’t have a pedestal, Lord Shiva instructed the celestial architect Vishwakarma to build one.

Ironically, it took a modern-day Vishwakarma to revamp Murdeshwar and put it on a pedestal. Local entrepreneur and real estate developer RN Shetty renovated the ancient temple and transformed a sleepy coastal village into a hub of pilgrim tourism. He erected the second tallest Shiva idol in the world at the cost of one crore rupees, besides a mythology-themed garden and lofty 20-storeyed *Raja gopura* or grand gateway tower of the temple.

Understandably, most of the properties are run by the RNS Group across various categories — the basic RNS Guest House, the mid-segment RNS Residency, the high end Naveen

Beach Resort and Naveen Golf Resort, even an RNS Highway Hotel. The wide, scenic beach is the hub of all activity with hawkers, boat rides, water sports and fishermen bringing home the catch at dawn. The beach is safe for swimming, except in the monsoons when the sea gets rough. Weekends tend to be crowded.

WHAT TO SEE AND DO

Murdeshwar Temple

Set against Kandukagiri hillock, the seaside shrine is connected to the mainland by a thin wisp of land, which forms the scenic approach to the temple. Located on the site of a much older shrine, two inscriptions

→ FAST FACTS

When to go The best season to visit Murdeshwar is post-monsoon, between October and March, when the sea is playful and the days are not all that sultry

Tourist Office

● Office of the Deputy Director
Department of Tourism
NH-17, Near RTO Office, Goa Main Road,
Karwar, Uttara Kannada
Tel: 08382-221172 (DD Office)
Cell: 09483132206 (TO)
09742322901 (DTC)

STD Code 08385

→ GETTING THERE

Air: Nearest Airport is Bajpe, Mangaluru (148 km/ 3 1/2 hrs) is connected to major metros like Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, Mumbai and more by major national carriers. A taxi to Murudeshwar costs approx ₹ 3,500

Rail: Murudeshwar has a railway station but few trains stop here. Opt instead for any of the trains plying on the Mumbai-Goa-Mangaluru-Konkan Railway line which stop at the most prominent and the nearest railhead, Bhatkal (16km/ 1/2 hr) from Mumbai. The Matsyagandha Express halts at Murudeshwar Station. Autos from Bhatkal (₹ 350) will drop you off at Murudeshwar. An alternate option is to board a train till Shimoga (6 hrs) from Bengaluru and then cover the rest of the journey by road

Road: If you're driving from Bengaluru, take the NH48 to Tumkur via Nelamangala. Then you can switch to NH206 to Honavar via Arsikere, Kadur, Shimoga, Sagar and Talguppa. At Honavar, turn south along the NH17 via Udupi, Koteswar, Kundapur, Byndoor and Bhatkal. Regular state transport and private buses operate between Bengaluru and Bhatkal from Majestic **Bus** Stand. Naik Tours and Travels (Tel: 08385-260335, 09844022915) on Temple Road in Murudeshwar rents out Tourist Vehicles and also organises bus tickets (ordinary buses/ Volvo) to major cities like Mangaluru and Bengaluru



date the construction of the Nandi mantapa to 1542 by Vijayanagar king Devaraya II. Two life-size concrete elephants stand guard outside the 20-storey 237.5 ft high raja gopura. The present temple, with its golden tint and sculptures of *yakshas* and *yakshinis*, is apparently a blend of Chalukyan and Kadamban styles of architecture. However, the dark sanctum sanctorum remains untouched, where Lord Shiva is worshipped in his ascetic form of an aghora linga.

Timings 5:30am to 1pm, 2:30pm to 8 pm

Shiva statue

Scattered over the Kandukagiri Hill, five minutes from the temple is a

Giant Shiva keeping an eye, or three, on beach buffs at Murudeshwar

mythological fantasy park conceptualised by RN Shetty — Ravana in meditation, Ganga emerging from Shiva's matted locks as Sage Bhagirathi looks on and Arjuna on his *ratha* listening to Lord Krishna expounding the Bhagwad Gita. Towering above is the 123 ft high, four-armed statue of Lord Shiva seated in meditation, said to be the second tallest Shiva statue in the world. With his back to the sea, one hand rests on his *yoga danda* (wooden staff); the other is stretched, palm outward, in blessing, while his rear arms hold a *damru* (double drum) and a trident respectively. There's no entry fee to the park, which has a

nice circumambulatory path around the hill, perfect for a nice walk.

WHERE TO STAY

RNS Residency (Cell: 08762471841; Tariff:2,500-6,000) is a lovely beachside luxury hotel with a great view of the Arabian Sea, the palm-fringed beach and rolling hills in the distance, from the upper floor rooms. It has 86 centrally air-conditioned rooms (50 sea-facing, 25 pool-facing and 11 sunset-view). On account of its proximity to the temple precinct, it's a pure vegetarian joint with no liquor. The hotel has a restaurant, coffee shop and a conference hall.

Recently, water sports like kayaking, has been started by the hotel. The **RNS Golf Resort** (Tel: 08762471752; Tariff: 3,500-8,260) spread over 42 acres, the luxury resort is located in a beautiful golf course by the sea with rooms and a restaurant overlooking the greens, beside a swimming pool. The **RNS Guest House** (Cell: 08762471842; Tariff: 1,700-5,000; TE) is a mid-budget hotel with 45 rooms and ideal for families on a tight budget. The **Mavalli Beach Heritage Home** (Cell: 09901767993; Tariff: ₹4,000 upwards) located on Murudeshwar Beach Road) is a lovely beachfront heritage homestay offers five rooms with traditional decor and great sea views and sunsets from the balcony. Enjoy the warm hospitality of hosts Rajeshri, Devdas and family with home-cooked Indian

Bhatkal Jain stone inscriptions



ANURAG MALLICK

and Continental food — from seafood to chicken ghee roast and local beverages.

AROUNDS

Bhatkal (16 km)

Once a part of the Hoysala Empire during the rule of Ballala III from 1291 to 1343, Bhatkal is an ancient port town that was later administered by the Vijayanagara kings, who had their coastal headquarters at Honnavar. Bhatkal became an important trading port of the Vijayanagar Empire in the 16th century, frequented by Jain and Arab merchants who came to sell their wares, horses from Arabia and weapons in exchange for sugar, pepper, spices and rice.

Many of Bhatkal's temples and Jain *basadis* were built during this period of prosperity. Italian traveller Varthema (1503) noted that Bhatkal was a noble, beautiful city among the top-ranking centres of trade and commerce in the Vijayanagara Empire. Emperor Krishnadevaraya allowed the Portuguese to build a fort here in 1510 but little of it survives. After the fall of Vijayanagara, the Saluva rulers who ruled from their capital Hadavalli 16km away, brought the coveted town under their rule. Eminent Kannada scholar Akalanka II was born here and became the mentor of Jain grammarian Bhattakalanka (1598), who wrote the treatise *Shabd-anushasana*. It is said that Bhattakalanka rescued the people during an earthquake and hence his

ANURAG MALLICK



Bhatkal's largest Jain temple Jattappa Nayakana Chandranatheshvara Basadi

name was given to this place. Many holy temples and *basadis* were constructed here during Chennabhaira Devi's rule.

Bhatkal's largest Jain temple is said to be **Jattappa Nayakana Chandranatheshvara Basadi**, built in 1556 by Narana Nayaka, son of a general in the queen's army. The double-storey structure has three chambers on each floor, which once housed images of *tirthankaras*. Inscriptions in the complex describe Bhatkal as a 'town of palaces and shrines glowing with the riches and splendour of the kingdom'. A tall granite pillar rising above the crowded marketplace draws one to **Parshvanatha Basadi** dedicated to the 23rd Jain *tirthankara*. The squat shrine with ornate balustrades and *dvarapalas* (guardians at the door)

was built in Vijayanagar style in 1545 with donations from Bhatkal's traders during the reign of Queen Chennadeviamma of Hadavalli. With the decline of the Vijayanagar Empire, the queen controlled local trade and battled the Portuguese who called her 'Raina da Pimenta' or Pepper Queen. Inscriptions describe acts of war, worship, faith and sacrifice. One inscription mentions a Portuguese raid on Bhatkal on 23 October 1542 describing how the Portuguese captain laid siege to the city, burnt it down and marched towards the palace. Warrior Enkapa Nayaka died a hero's death while battling the enemy at the gates.

Many Saraswat Brahmin traders and Konkani families had migrated from Goa to Bhatkal to escape

Portuguese persecution. Over time, Arabian traders intermingled with them to form a new community called 'Nav-ayaths', and literally means 'newly arrived'. While their dialect borrows heavily from Konkani and the local tastes have a touch of Arabia, they have developed their own distinct identity.

The old Jumma Masjid dating back to 1447 AD had been given a modern facelift but the old town is littered with opulent mansions that hint of a rich past — **Ishaqi House**, **Barmavar House**, **Bab-e-Africa**, the spectacular **Barnawi House**, with imported tiles, stained glass windows and ornate woodwork and **Moulana Bungalow** on the highway, with a monogrammed 'M' on its gates.

In the late 17th century, the Portuguese reached an agreement

Bhatkal Halwa



ANURAG MALLICK

with the queen to build churches and realised their dream of opening a factory at Bhatkal in 1678. Under Tipu's rule, Bhatkal's overseas trade received a further boost. East of town at Moodbhatkal, the lofty flagpole of **Kethapayya Narayana temple** stands out amidst a field of coconut and *adike* (betelnut) trees. The stone temple with granite carvings is colloquially known as 'Adike Narayana'!

Where to eat

Naveen Beach Restaurant at RNS Residency is the main eating hub of Murdeshwar and offers authentic, pure-veg South Indian cuisine and veg *thalis*. Several beach shacks serve vegetarian cuisine while some, tucked away from the temple area, serve fish curry-rice. Nisarga Residency has the non-veg Hotel Nisarga and a separate veg restaurant Sharavathy.

The busy bazaar has lots of local delicacies like date halwa, salted *roti*, Bhatkali biryani (try the chicken biryani at **Kwality Restaurant**) and the famous Bhatkal halwa, a glutinous sweet made of godi (wheat extract). Every day at dawn, in the backyard of Bhatkal Super Halwa's home factory on Bunder Road, Nazeer, Israj and Yakub take turns to stir the large cauldron of halwa, which is poured into trays to cool, cut into cubes and shipped out. **Hashim Bakery** stocks jars of Bhatkali *lon miri* or red chilli paste and *aale lahsoon* or ginger garlic masala paste, the heart and soul of Navayathi cuisine. **Chillies** on the



Pink-hued salt is extracted in the traditional manner at the Sanikatta salt pans

Nethrani Island

Nethrani or Pigeon Island is easily the best **dive site** off the Karnataka coast. The landing is a little rough with a short scramble over rocks covered in barnacles. Set atop a hillock, an old temple at the summit, offering a stunning view of the sea, is accessed by an arduous trek. According to local legend, a Brahmin once went to perform puja on the island in a makeshift boat fashioned out of banana leaf. Sadly, the leaf broke and the priest drowned leaving the island uninhabited ever since! Local fishermen leave live cocks and goats as offerings at the small temple atop the island's summit for a wish that came true. The British tagged it Pigeon Island because of the large number of pigeons. Another bird that frequents the island is the swiftlet, whose nests are a gourmet's delight as Bird's Nest Soup.

The island, with its corals and clear blue waters, is a great snorkelling and diving hub. Local resorts like Sai Vishram and adventure outfit Barracuda Diving organise trips to Nethrani. Each **dive site** is unique. *Dini's Delight*, 8 m deep, has a gigantic coral head and one may find

lobsters, moray eel, angelfish and surgeonfish. The shallow *Nursery*, only 10m deep, is ideal for beginners and photographers and is named after the profusion of juveniles of several fish species. *Grand Central Station*, a gradual slope going down 20m has schools of big surgeonfish, parrotfish, red snappers, batfish, barracudas and rabbitfish. *Aladdin's Cave* is believed to be the mouth of a tunnel leading to the core of the island. The Abyss drops down 35m and has large schools of barracuda and tuna. The dead end *Cul de Sac* with sheer walls on either side teems with tiny reef fish and several species of goby in a bed of sea grass.

Netrani Adventures (Cell: 09900431111, 09916554422) offers scuba diving at Netrani Island; trips range Rs 5,000 (45 mins) upwards. They also offer scuba courses; for more info log on to netraniadventures.com. **Dive Goa** (Cell 09325030110), based at the O Pescador Resort at Panjim's Dona Paula Jetty in Goa offers diving packages (inclusive of diving gear) here. It has a permanent dive centre at Netrani. For information on course fees, packages and custom-made tours, visit their website divegoa.com



A narrow suspension bridge over river Sharavati

highway serves excellent seafood and delicious non-veg fare.

Where to Stay

RNS Highway Hotel (Cell: 08385268192; Tariff: ₹900-2,300) near RNS Hospital, just 1 km from the railway station and 700 m from the bus stop, is a budget hotel with basic rooms, an average restaurant with limited menu and ample parking, ideal for highway travellers looking for a quick overnight stop. **The Royal Oak** (Tel: 08385-222655; Tariff: ₹2,500 upwards), formerly known as Citrus Murudeshwar, is on Bunder Road, near the Bus Station, Belalkanda, is a 30 min drive from Murdeshwar. It has 32 rooms (including triple rooms and family rooms) with veg and non veg restaurants on separate floors. **Hotel Kola Paradise** (Tel: 08385-223707,

225291; Tariff: ₹650-1,250) on Shamsuddin Circle, opposite the Bus Stand is a basic hotel on the highway with simple rooms.

Idagunji (20 km)

Drive 13 km north of Murudeshwar and turn right 7 km off NH-17 to the holy 'Edakunji kshetra'. The small village in Karwar's Honnavar taluka is located on the left bank of the Sharavathy River, hence the name Ida-kunji, from eda meaning 'to the left' and *kunj* meaning garden. It is the holy seat of the *Pancha-khadya-priya* Ganapathi worshipped with an unusual offering of *moode* (an idli-like offering), made up of five ingredients called *mashbhaksha*. The offerings are stacked on all the sides of the idol till it reaches its head but oddly, it is never enough to completely cover it!

Honnavar (20 km)

Once Honnuru or 'Golden Town', Honnavar is home to Rama Teertha, the spot where Lord Rama shot an arrow to create a perennial spring. As the story goes, while wandering in search of Sita with his brother Laxman, Rama encountered an asura (demon) who had caused a drought in the area. Rama killed the demon and shot an arrow into the earth and a spring gushed forth, rejuvenating the earth. The place came to be known as Rama Teertha and centuries later it continues to flow, even in peak summer. Later, Honnavar came under Hyder Ali before it developed into a naval dockyard and trading hub. The Sharavathi bridge here is the longest in Karnataka. About 6 km from Honnavar, Apsara Konda Falls is a picturesque setting with a fine beach.

Baindur (32 km)

Legend recounts how Sage Bindu undertook a penance near Ottinane where the river Sumana merges with the Arabian sea. The place became known as 'Bindu-uru' (Bindu's village) which evolved to Baindoor. The lush viewpoint Ottinane is located on a hillock off the highway as you head out of Maravanthe beyond Baindoor. Here, you can witness the confluence of the

Baindoor or Sumana River with the sea and amazing sunsets.

Where to stay

Sai Vishram Beach Resort (Cell: 088613 02296; Tariff: ₹8,000-14,000, with meals) on Someshwara Beach Road is a 'pure-veg, non-alcoholic beach resort'. It may not sound an attractive proposition at the outset but Sai Vishram will bowl you over with its charms! Named after Sai Baba, the resort, is owned by an ardent devotee, MD Manohar Shetty, cousin of noted medic Devi Shetty. Spread over 24 acres, it has 26 units — 10 luxurious beachside tents with shaded patios and a private backyard, 10 standard and deluxe AC rooms with sea views and 5 stepped AC cottages. Named Sun, Earth, Bhatkal and Water, each 'concept' house has a distinct vernacular design. Encouraging guests to spend time outdoors, none of the rooms have TV, telephones, newspaper or wi-fi, making it ideal for a complete detox. Try the backwater cruise during high tide, which takes you past Someshwara Temple, where the Baindoor River joins the sea, and 6 km inside to the sluice gate. Early mornings are ideal for dolphin cruises, while evenings must be reserved for a hike to Ottinane Sunset Point. ■

#Awomekarnataka





PRASHANT PANJIAR

Two coves join to form an inverted symbol of 'Om', at Gokarna's Om Beach

GOKARNA

THE TALE OF THE SACRED ATMALINGA

■ ANURAG MALICK AND
PRIYA GANAPATHY

The scenic temple town of Gokarna on Karnataka's west coast is associated with an enchanting legend. The *atmalinga* was the supreme embodiment of Lord Shiva, worshipped by the *saptarishis* (seven great sages) and all the gods. Blessings were bestowed on the person who merely glanced at it and untold power was entrusted to the one who possessed it. Pleased by Ravana's great penance, Lord Shiva granted his wish to carry the *linga* from Kailash to Lanka. After performing the midday rites at

Saptakoteshwar (present day Goa), Ravana neared the coast around Gokarna when Lord Vishnu artfully blocked the sun with his *sudarshana chakra*. The pious Ravana thought it was time for his evening prayer. Lord Ganesha appeared as a Brahmin boy and offered to hold the *linga* while Ravana went to bathe. However, he put it down, where it took root. Despite Ravana's best efforts to uproot it, the *linga* remained affixed but suffered a distortion because of his brute force. It resembled the shape of a 'cow's ear' (*go-karna*), ergo, the name. Another legend states that Lord Shiva emerged from the ear of a cow at this spot. Some say that the

name originated from the ear-shaped confluence of the rivers Gangavali and Aghanashini where Gokarna is located. The temple that came up over it was called Mahabaleshwar after Ravana's *maha-bal* (great power) and the town became a pilgrim centre and one of the *sapta puris* (seven sacred spots) of Karnataka.

The panoramic drive from the highway weaves past the chequered salt beds of Sanikatta resembling outsized waffles, rocky cliffs, and the Arabian Sea. Car Street, the arterial road winding through town, is lined with temples, bylanes, chariots and clusters of tiled homes with vernacular architecture, besides quaint Udupi eateries, souvenir shops, and cyber cafés. Two Brahmin sects, who live on either side of Gokarna's Car Street, manage the temple activities in a three-year rotational stint.

An ancient pilgrimage centre, Gokarna is an important seat of Sanskrit education, where Brahmin priests recite Sanskrit *shlokas* in temple courtyards and devotees perform *pind daan* for the salvation of their ancestors. Only Hindus are allowed inside Gokarna's temples.

Besides the temples of Mahabaleshwar, Maha Ganapathi, and Venkataramana, are smaller shrines dedicated to Bhadrakali and Tamra Gauri.

Yet, Gokarna has another side that goes beyond its spiritual air. Ever since an 'Om-shaped' beach was discovered by the spillover crowd from Goa, a motley mix of backpackers, yoga practitioners, and

beach bums got added to the usual flow of pilgrims. Adding colour are the Halakkis, an agriculturist tribe that traditionally sold *haal-akki* or 'milk-rice' for subsistence, now seen hawking vegetables in the market dressed in beaded finery.

Gokarna in some ways is Goa pushed back a few decades. While the main beach attracts the devout, leisure tourists favour Kudle and Om beaches to the south. Hidden from view, reachable only by a coastal hike are the isolated Paradise and Half Moon beaches. Quaint and rustic beach shacks with hammocks line the edge against a backdrop of mountains. Some of the local resorts organise activities like nature hikes, treks, birdwatching excursions and a trip to Yana, besides water sports such as parasailing, banana boat rides, and snorkelling off Om and Kudle beaches.

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→ FAST FACTS

When to go From November to March

Tourist Office

● Department of Tourism, Government of Karnataka 📍

No. 49, 2nd Floor, Khanija Bhavan,

Race Course Road, Bengaluru

Tel: 080-22352525/ 2727/ 2828

Cell: 09686633491, 07795516979

🌐 karnatakaturism.org

STD Code 08386

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

Mahabaleshwar Temple

Gokarna's ancient Mahabaleshwar Temple is often compared to the Vishwanath Temple at Varanasi, hence it's hailed as Dakshin Kashi (Kashi of the South). King Mayurasharma of the Kadamba dynasty built the earliest temple around the mid-4th century although most shrines in the temple complex belong to the 16th-17th century, the later Vijayanagara period. A 6ft tall *linga* is housed in a square called the *Saligrama Peetha* with only the tip visible through a small opening. The entire *atmalinga* is opened for public viewing only during the colourful festival of Ashtabandha, held once in 12 years. The Dodda Ratha (big chariot) and Sanna Ratha (small

chariot) used in temple festivities are housed nearby. Customarily, pilgrims first bathe in the sea and worship a Shiva *linga* fashioned out of mud before paying tribute at the Mahabaleshwar Temple. Male devotees must be bare-chested to enter the main sanctum and perform *jalabhisheka* (consecration by holy water) or *doodhabhisheka* (consecration by milk).

Tamra Gauri Temple

Located to the rear of the Mahabaleshwar Temple, the temple of Tamra Gauri (also Gouri) is dedicated to Lord Shiva's consort as Uma or Gokarna-nayaki who came to *Tamra Parvat* (Copper Mountain) in search of Shiva. Her idol is seen holding a balance in her hands, alluding to the tale of her measuring the sanctity of Gokarna versus Varanasi and proving how the coastal town outweighed Kashi in terms of its spiritual weight!

Maha Ganapathi Temple

The temple deifies Lord Ganesha, who in the guise of a Brahmin boy deceived Ravana to save the *atmalinga* from being carried off to Lanka. Within the shrine is a 5ft ancient two-armed Ganesha granite idol. A hole at the top of its head represents the violent blow struck by an angry Ravana. The temple is also known as Siddha Ganapati. The annual Shivaratri festival in February is celebrated with a *rath yatra* when the temple chariot ritually starts from the Ganesha shrine to the Mahabaleshwar temple.

Temple chariots decked up for a festival



SHUTTERSTOCK



Gokarna is also an important place of pilgrimage

Venkataramana Temple

For his part in the *atmalinga* saga, Lord Vishnu is worshipped here as Venkataramana. Situated at a junction in the eastern end of Gokarna town, the temple guards over the Mahabaleshwar shrine at the far end of the road. A lofty, ornate pillar stands outside the temple's sanctum sanctorum.

Koti Teertha

On the way to the main Gokarna beach and reachable by a maze of narrow lanes is the Koti Teertha *kund* (tank) with its emerald green waters. The sacred man-made tank is quite deep and graphic signs warn devotees to take care while having a dip. Nearby is a temple dedicated to Lord Krishna, apparently built where he performed a penance to kill the demon Banasura.

Rama Teertha/Bharateshwara Temple

A little to the south of town, en route to Kudle and Om beaches, lies Rama Teertha, a temple built on a hill at the spot where Lord Rama and his brother Bharata performed penance, hence its other moniker, Bharateshwara temple. The Garuda and Rama-Sita Caves are located nearby and the vantage point offers a great view of the Arabian Sea.

Kudle Beach

South of Gokarna's main beach dominated by pilgrims, lies the broad, palm-fringed Kudle Beach, accessible by a 20-minute coastal walk from town or a circuitous 5km drive. Stretching for nearly a kilometre, Kudle Beach is a lot cleaner and quieter, and is favoured by those who are here to worship nature.

Om Beach

Gokarna's famous Om Beach was once a coastal hike away past Kudle, a 30-minute jaunt, but a direct road from Gokarna town has made it easily accessible, taking away the sheen and allure of a 'hidden beach'. Here, a promontory juts out from the coastline, dividing the beach into two semi-circular arcs resembling the inverted letter 'Om', visible clearly once you walk past the shacks lining the whole sandy shore and climb the mountain on the far side.

Half Moon/Paradise Beaches

The trail south of Om Beach winds through a small forest patch and along a narrow path with the mountainous slope on the left and a sheer drop to the right. After the isolated Half Moon, walk over rocks

A lively game of volleyball underway



PRASHANT PANJIAR

and follow the trail of white arrows over crags and a little diversion into a forest patch before you emerge on to Paradise. If hiking is strenuous, take a boat from Gokarna.

WHERE TO EAT

This being a temple town, Gokarna's main beach is purely vegetarian with mostly Indian food available, besides the odd café serving Western cuisine. Gokarna International's **Downtown Restaurant** offers good coastal cuisine while **Purohit Restaurant** serves veg North and South Indian fare and Chinese dishes. **Pai Hotel** on the main road is a good place for *idlis* and *dosas*. The beach cafés at Kudle and Om beaches rustle up anything from pizza, pasta, falafel, *shakshuka* to banana pancake and muesli with curd, fruit, and honey. Eat at **White Elephant Restaurant & Cottages**, **La Pizzeria Kudle View** and **The Rock Namaste Café** on Kudle; and **Shantidham Café**, **Nirvana Café**, **Raasta Café**, and **Dolphin Shanti Café** at Om Beach. **Sea Bird** and **Om Beach Resort** have in-house restaurants as well.

WHERE TO STAY

Gokarna is a pilgrim town with no-frills hotels and basic lodges run by temple priests. A good bet for pilgrims is the **New Prasad Nilaya** (Cell: 07406958097, 09483939434). Most others head to the 'cliff-top' or 'beachside' shacks around Kudle and Om beaches. Many pop up in 'season' for a spell and get relocated



ANURAG MALLICK

Om Beach Resort has four Konkan-style colonial cottages and offers yoga

or renamed, though a slew of resorts has added some swank to Gokarna.

Hotel Om International (Tel: 08386-256445; Cell: 09480603786; Tariff: ₹2,464-4,130 +breakfast) on Taramakki Road, close to KSRTC Bus Stand, Ganjigadde, is located in the heart of Gokarna, near the main temple and the beach; the landmark hotel has been around for over three decades. Though revamped from Om Lodge to Om 'International', the rooms are nothing fancy but clean and equipped with a mini-fridge, locker, and hot water kettle.

CGH Earth SwaSwara (Tel: 0484-4261751; Cell: 09744070099; Tariff: ₹76,000 for 3 nights, all-inclusive with pick up and drop from Goa/Hubballi airport) at Donibhail, Om Beach, is a wellness resort. The 30-acre campus, with three large reservoirs for rainwater harvesting,

has 24 traditional Konkan villas made of earthy laterite and rustic thatch that camouflage its plush interiors: an open inner courtyard with aircon only in the bedroom and bathrooms partially open to the sky. Locally sourced organic vegetables and fresh sea fish are served at Anamaya Beach Restaurant and Cocum Restaurant and the menu does not feature meats, hard liquor, processed foods, dairy, refined sugar, or refined flour. The signature programme, Swa Wellbeing for 5 nights costs ₹1,22,500 for two. For longer stays, try their rustic low-impact forest abode Vana Vasa nearby. The **Kudle Beach View Resort & Spa** (Tel: 08386-256056/9; Cell: 08130967666; Tariff: ₹5,500-8,700 +breakfast; TE) at Kudle Beach, sprawls across three blocks and is accessible by a series of steps. It has

beach-view rooms, garden-view rooms, and a massage centre. The spacious deluxe and superior rooms are airy, with LED TV with DTH, aircon, cosy couches, mini bar, coffee maker, and wi-fi. There's also a garden restaurant, a rooftop

restaurant and swimming pool. Local sightseeing and water sports at Kudle Beach are organised. The location is great but the topography and steps make it difficult for senior citizens and people with physical disability. Jungle Lodges' **Om Beach Resort** (Cell: 09480885307; Tariff: ₹2,758-3,245 +all meals, nature walk, temple visit pp) on Om Beach Road, Bangle Gudde, features four Konkan-style colonial cottages, colour-coded brown, green, blue, and violet to represent the four rivers in the region — Sharavathy, Gangavali, Kali, and Souparnika. Arogya Kshetra, the Ayurveda section, has a host of specialised rejuvenative and therapeutic treatments, besides yoga sessions. There's an open-air bar with an airy restaurant at the lower level. **Arthigamya Spa & Resort** (Cell: 08880688806; Tariff: ₹3,500-5,500 +breakfast; TE), also on Om Beach Road, is a new resort with spacious standard and luxury rooms with bathtubs, a restaurant, a good outdoor pool (open 24 hrs) and a spa offering traditional massages, therapies, and scrubs. Kudle Beach is just 100m away, a minute's walk. **Nimmu House** (Tel: 256730; Cell: 09448181532; Tariff: ₹1,500-3,000; TE) on Mani Bhadra Road is an iconic family-run budget guesthouse, started in 1990 by the gregarious Nirmala (nicknamed Nimmu) and Ajit Gokarn. Revamped in 2004 and run by the next generation, Amit and Bharata, its warm hospitality keeps regulars coming back. The property has 10 AC rooms with attached private balconies offering

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→ GETTING THERE

AIR Nearest airport: Dabolim Airport, Goa (155km/ 3½ hrs), is well connected to Bengaluru, Mumbai by major airlines. Taxi to Gokarna costs ₹3,500-4,000 approx. Another option is the Hubli Airport (145km/3 hrs), which offers connections to Bengaluru, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Tirupati, and Jindal Vidya by Spicejet and StarAir. Taxi to Gokarna costs ₹3,000-3,500 approx

RAIL Gokarna Railway Station is 10km from town. It is connected to Mumbai, Panjim, Mangalore (Mangaluru), and Ernakulum by several trains, such as Matsyagandha Express, Marusagar SF Express, Poorna Express etc

ROAD: From Bengaluru, take NH4 to Tumkur and then switch to NH206 towards Shimoga. The drive gets pleasant after Bhadravathi as you head towards Honnavar via Sagar. From Honnavar, you can cruise comfortably along NH17 to Madangeri; from here take a left turn towards Gokarna

BUS Good options are KSRTC's Airavat service from Bengaluru (₹843), Karnataka Sarige ₹518, and the Non AC Sleeper ₹769



Pink-hued salt is extracted in the traditional manner at the Sanikatta salt pans

sea view, besides wi-fi, car parking and left-luggage services.

For more, see *Gokarna Accommodation Listings* on pages 435-436

AROUNDS

Sanikatta Salt Pans (4km)

If there's one place worth its salt, it would be Sanikatta. Located on the banks of the Aghanashini river en route to Gokarna, the vast tapestry of muddy brown salt pans is a dramatic sight. Since 1720, this tiny hamlet spread over 581 acres has quietly built its reputation as the oldest salt manufacturing site in Karnataka and still continues this legacy. After meandering through the forested Western Ghats, the Gangavalli and Aghanashini rivers are enriched with medicinal and mineral benefits. Sanikatta salt is extracted in the

natural manner of open evaporation in salt fields in this brackish backwater region, yielding upto 12,000 tonnes per year. The typically pink-hued salt is the magic ingredient in Uttara Kannada and GSB (Gaud Saraswat Brahmin) cuisine. You can watch the salt-making process at the Nagerbail Salt Owner's Co-operative Society (Tel 08386-256131).

Tadadi Port (5km)

Located south of Gokarna is Tadadi Port, a minor fishing port with a fish processing plant set up with Indo-Danish collaboration. The local heavyweight Sayi Exports ships out an assortment of seafood to countries as far as Japan. A trip to see their fish-curing plant can be enlightening.

Mirjan Fort (21km)

Set on the banks of the Aghanashini river, the fort is a remarkable piece of

SHUTTERSTOCK



The 16th-century Mirjan Fort, built by a queen, has a double-walled architecture

architecture that withstood several battles in the past. The construction of the 16th century fort is attributed to Queen Chennabhairadevi of Gersoppa, who is said to have lived here during her reign, as the nearby port at Mirjan village grew as a trade centre shipping pepper, saltpetre, and betelnut to Surat. Accessed by wide steps at its four entrances, though only one is open today, the laterite fort is double-walled, has lofty turrets on its bastions, besides several interlinked wells and canals.

Kumta (32km)

This small coastal town synonymous with Kumta onions and chilli is also known for its sandalwood handicrafts made by the Gudigars, traditional artisans. Like a lot of shrines in Uttara Kannada, the Shanteri Kamakshi and Mahalsa temples were shifted here

from Goa to escape plunder by the Portuguese. The town's main bazaar is a good place to buy sandalwood statuettes. From there, a 2km ride westwards leads you to the secluded Kumta Beach. The rocky hillocks are great in the evenings as the sun slowly sinks into the Arabian Sea. Kumta serves as a base to explore Yana and the rich hinterland in the interiors of Uttara Kannada.

In Kumta The Hotel Pandurang International (Tel: 08386-221538; Tariff: ₹950-1,900; TE) in Gandhi Nagar, on the main highway cutting through town, is a no-frills hotel and makes for a convenient pitstop, with its 41 rooms and a restaurant. **Aura Ecostay** (Cell: 08971280866, 09632673893; Tariff: ₹3,500-10,000 +breakfast; TE) on NH-66, Dhareshwar Kadekodi, has 15 spacious AC rooms with sit-outs overlooking

Dhareshwar Beach. Categorized as the basic Aura Priya, deluxe Aura Classic, and luxury Aura Signature, the cottages are made of eco-friendly material. **Kedige Homestay** (Tel: 222273, 220426; Cell: 08762519277; Tariff: ₹2,100-5,000; TE), near the Alvekodi Church, is run by Prakash and Prajna Shanbhag as a charming little homestay, 3km south of Kumta town on the highway. It's a simple setup of three non-AC rooms with attached bath, balcony and terrace, with delicious Konkani fare.

Located on an 8km (or 5-mile) stretch of beach, **5 Mile Beach Resort** (Cell: 06381266942; Tariff: ₹1,000 +breakfast pp) at Holangadde Grama offers AC deluxe Swiss tents with private bathrooms. Enjoy the sight of dolphins, spectacular sunrise and sunsets, play volleyball, and take a boat to Gokarna (seasonal). **Nirvana Nature** (Cell: 07742735052; Tariff: ₹999) at Nirvana Beach Road Hubbanageri/Kagal village offers simple cottages made of stone, wood and bamboo. The property's tree houses overlook the sea.

Yana (50km)

In a scene right out of the *Lord of the Rings* saga, the towers of Jagamohini and Bhairaveshwara rise like giant black karst limestone columns above the lush Sahyadris and the blue

Chandika river. Reachable by a 3km hike after a drive from Sirsi (16km) or Kumta town (47km), Yana is famous for its crystalline formations of black rock that have lent a dramatic backdrop to several film songs.

Yana's song-and-dance routine is not new. Legend has it that the demon Bhasmasura received a boon from Lord Shiva that gave him the power to turn anybody into ashes by just placing his hand on their head. Wishing to test his new powers on the god himself, he chased him till Shiva found refuge in the caves of Yana. Lord Vishnu was called for help and he, in the form of seductive dancer Mohini, lured Bhasmasura into a dance duel to match her steps. While imitating her clever pose of placing her hand on her own head, the demon turned himself to ashes. Even today, the faithful believe the rock was blackened by the flames and that the ashy residue found at Yana are the remains of Bhasmasura.

Of the 61 rock formations, the most notable are the twin *shikharas*: the 120m tall Jagamohini and 90m Bhairaveshwara, named after the incarnations of Vishnu and Shiva. At the base is a large cave temple dedicated to Lord Bhairaveshwara.

The adjacent cave houses a bronze image of Chandika, an incarnation of Devi Durga. ■

#Awesom Karnataka





Photographs by ANURAG MALLICK

Kurumgad Cintacor Island Retreat

KARWAR

NORTHERN QUEEN

■ VIVEK M

As the highway swirls and descends towards Karwar, the sudden change in the landscape, from the dull brown and amber hues of the hills to the lush green palm-fringed coast, partly hidden by a mist and punctuated by little rivulets emptying themselves into the sea, is both dramatic and welcoming. The beach appears in sight the very next minute and almost magically, there's nothing between you and the deep blue sea. It's the same stretch of beach that Rabindranath Tagore was referring to when he said, "...the beauty of

nature is not a mirage of the imagination but reflects the joy of the infinite...".

This is just a curtain-raiser to what is to follow. The alluring islands off the coast of Karwar, close to the mouth of the mighty **Kali river**, make this part of the country a sought-after coastal destination. Here, after basking in the sun for a while, only the perplexity over the next course of action can somewhat spoil the reverie: should one head back into the woods to feast on freshly caught crabs, or slide into a hammock for a nap under shady palms, or hop on to a boat to watch dolphins frolicking in the sea?

Back on the beach, the evening comes with food carts and a refreshing breeze from the sea. As the sun disappears behind the islands, sitting atop one of the viewpoints at Karwar, you'll be rewarded with a stunning view of the sea and the crimson sky. Many decades after Tagore penned the words in "infinite joy", it remains an apt description of the gift Karwar lavishes on every visitor.

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

Rabindranath Tagore Beach

Named after the great poet whose first play was written during his stay at Karwar, the beach today is the nucleus of the town's social life. Locals love to spend a few hours every evening here, chatting with friends and watching children play on the beach. Kids can enjoy a ride on the toy train that runs alongside the beach. You can also take them to the Naval Museum or the aquarium close by. At the museum, you can watch a short video on naval ships and see the displayed models and photographs of naval ships.

The Rabindranath Tagore Beach at Karwar is a nice and long stretch of sand but is not too clean. Swimming is not actively recommended here.

◆ **Museum entry fee ₹15 Timings** 10am–1pm, 4.30pm–6pm **Aquarium Entry Fee ₹50 Timings** 10am–6pm

Temples in and around Karwar

The **Vithoba-Rakhumai Temple**, built in 1603, is on the Main Road at

Kajubagh, just a kilometre away from the bus stand. It has been renovated, but the results have been a little disappointing. The **Dattatreya Temple** at Baad, around a century old, still exudes an old-world charm and has a tranquil ambience. The **Muralidhara Mutt** at Kodibagh has an 85-year-old structure, with a tiled roof, carved pillars and airy courtyards. A round trip to all these places is doable by auto.

◆ **Note** The temples and mutt are open from 6am till late evening.

Bridge across the river Kali


A walk across the Kali River Bridge during the early hours of the day is refreshing. Take occasional breaks on the way to look down: you'll see fisherfolk going out into the estuary

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→ FAST FACTS

When to go From September to March. Most resorts close during the monsoon

Tourist offices

● Office of the Deputy Director 
Department of Tourism
NH-17, Near RTO Office, Goa Main Road,

Karwar, Uttara Kannada
Tel: 08382-221172 (DD Office)
Cell: 09483132206 (TO)
Cell: 09742322901, (DTC)

 karnatakaturism.org,
karnatakaholidays.net

STD code 08382

in their canoes, hurling their nets just as the waters begin to glisten in the morning light; and wide-bellied boats leaving the village of Kodibagh to collect sand from the other bank.

Sadashivgad Hill, at the northern end of the Kali River Bridge, is a very popular hangout. At the base of the

western half of the hill is a play area with stone benches, offering fantastic views of the Kali river merging with the sea. Food carts selling 'Bombay' chaat and ice cream appear here after 4pm. Those seeking a bigger panorama of the landscape can climb up the steps to a viewpoint. The more daring can head to the top of the hill, where the ramparts of a fort, built in 1698 by the Sonda kings, are to be found.

Other beaches of Karwar

With its golden sands and delightful range of watersports, **Devbagh Beach** is a huge draw. On a good day, you might be lucky enough to spot dolphins while out on a sail. Lying in close proximity to Devbagh Beach, **Majali Beach** offers pretty much the same action. This happens to be a 'resort beach' and many of the guests enjoy the river cruise to **Tilmati Beach** with its black sands.

Though located 5km from Karwar, **Binaga Beach** lures enthusiasts with its Portuguese-era Our Lady of St Anne's Church. **Koodi Bagh Beach** offers lovely views of the Kali river joining the waters of the Arabian Sea. Water sports is again a big lure with a good smattering of canoes, kayaks, and banana boats dotting the sea here. Sunsets are really special at Koodi Bagh.

SHOPPING

The markets on the Main Road and around Subhas Circle sell a lot of local produce. Karwar is a good place to



PRASHANT PANJIAR



River Kali, Rabindranath Tagore's bust at Karwar beach, people enjoy a boat ride

buy cashews, often sold on the streets. You can also pick up salted or masala cashews from the **Kwality Dry Fruits Store** on the Main Road. Whole-mango pickles are a Karwar speciality. **UK Pickles**, located opposite the Mahadeo Temple at Baad, makes some of the best. To pick up handicrafts, head to the **Arvind Art Centre** on Coutinho Road; they specialise in making wooden mandaps that serve as stands for idols.

WHERE TO EAT

Undoubtedly, the small popular eatery Swetha Lunch Home in Ananda Arcade on Green Street serves the most authentic flavours of Karwar. Run by the Basrur family, it dishes out excellent seafood, sourced

fresh from Baithkol port. Try the prawn or crab ghee roast, prawn biryani, kalva sukka (oyster), tisrya sukka (clam) or the signature bangda mastani (mackerel coated in red masalas, wrapped in leaf and cooked) along with meals with bangda fry. The cooks at the **Devbagh Resort** make some great dishes out of mussels and crabs. Alcohol is available at all the resorts except Riveredge, where you're allowed to bring your own. Hotel Bhadra's **Pavilion Bar and Restaurant** serves delicious, Karwar-style mackerel, seer fish, and prawn masala. The cuisine is a mix of Maharashtrian and Goan styles and most dishes are bright red and spicy. Hotel Bhadra's Udupi Caf   offers idlis and dosas for breakfast. **Hotel Amrut** on the Main Road is

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→ GETTING THERE

AIR: Nearest airport: Dabolim Airport, Goa (90km/ 2hrs), is well connected to Bengaluru and Mumbai by major airlines. Taxi to Karwar costs ₹3,500-4,000 approx

RAIL: Karwar Railway Station is well connected to Bengaluru, Delhi, Mumbai, Coimbatore, Thiruvananthapuram, Ajmer etc. Important trains serving this station are Netravati Express, Kochuveli-Mumbai LTT Garib Rath Express, Jamnagar-Tirunelveli Express, Mangala Lakshadweep SF Express, Matsyagantha Express, Coimbatore-Jabalpur SF Express, Pune-Ernakulam SF Express, Thiruvananthapuram-Hazrat Nizamuddin SF Express etc

ROAD: From Bengaluru, take NH4 to Tumkur and then NH 206 towards Shivamogga. From Honnavar, one can cruise comfortably down NH17 to reach Karwar **BUS** KSRTC's Rajahmsa Executive service from Bengaluru ₹749, Airavat ₹867, Airavat Club Class ₹1,172, Karnataka Sarige ₹528, Non AC Sleeper ₹883. Buses to Goa also stop at Karwar.



Fresh fish figures on the menu of most of the resorts in Karwar

the best restaurant in town. The coastal cuisine on offer here, ranging from shell fish to pomfret, cooked using local spices, attracts a huge crowd. Try the chilli squid with chilled beer. **Hotel Sai International** and **Hotel Premier** also serve coastal and North Indian dishes in their restaurants, including kane and prawn masala in the Karwari style. **Hotel Poornima** on the Main Road serves good South Indian dishes for breakfast. **Ashirwad Ice Refreshments** on Kaikini Road makes the best icecreams and milk shakes in town. Do try out their 'lighthouse special'.

WHERE TO STAY

In the town

In case one wants to stay close to the Kali River Bridge, where all the action is centred, and yet not be a part of

any resort, then the only option is **Hotel Bhadra** (Tel: 08382-225212, 225212-13; Tariff ₹3,500-5,500; TE), located at the southern end of the bridge. The rooms are decent and basic but some of the bathrooms are dark and unventilated.

A good place to stay here is **Sterling Resort** (Tel: 266000-02; Tariff ₹6,000-8,000) near the Toll Naka. It has 50 rooms, some of them sea-facing, with a restaurant, Internet access and games.

Karwar town has many options for the budget traveller. **Hotel Premier** (Tel: 229925-26, 229925-27; Tariff ₹990-1,568) on Green Street has clean rooms and efficient service. **Hotel Sai International** (Tel: 229956; Tariff: ₹600-1,350) on the Main Road, with large rooms, is another good option. **Hotel Navarathna** (Tel: 226927; Tariff: ₹900-3,500; TE) has decent sized,

clean rooms. All these hotels arrange taxis for sightseeing.

For more, see Karwar Accommodation Listings on page 439

AROUNDS

Kurumgad Island (10km)

The tortoise-shaped island of Kurumgad (from kuruma, Sanskrit for 'tortoise' and gad meaning 'fort') is 7km from Baithkol jetty at Karwar. Fortified by Basalinga Nayak of the Sonda dynasty for a battle against the British, only the ruins of one bastion remain. Kurumgad served as a rustic island getaway called The Great Outdoors, until The Little Earth Group transformed it into a private island getaway called Cintacor Island Resort (Cell: 9487533640). A choice of plush, ocean-themed rooms with modern décor are set amidst wild shrubbery with balconies overlooking the Arabian Sea. Go on nature walks along neatly marked trails (Temple Trail, East Mile Trail, West Mile Trail), take a boat ride at sunrise or sunset and indulge in water and adventure sports. Enjoy the day's catch at Captain Nemo's Deck overlooking an infinity pool while watching dolphins dance in open waters. Cut off from all civilization, Kurumgad is

perfect for swimming, fishing, snorkeling, stargazing and luxurious massages at the cliff-side Kurumasana Spa. Every year in January thousands of devotees come for a pilgrimage on Pushya poornima, when the island resort shuts for two days. The adjacent Madhyalingad or Madyagad is also known as Sanyasi Island. Folklore recounts how the island was named after a sage who sought refuge here. Strangely, boats cannot dock here and local fishermen swear that a certain divine power can be felt even today.

Devgad/Oyster Rock (11km)

A 25 min boat ride from Kurumgad lies Devgad, once Devaragudda or 'god's hillock'. When the British docked here, they found its rocky shore full of oysters and named it Oyster Rock. A short walk leads to the summit where a 66 ft stone masonry lighthouse stands. Built in 1864 by Chance Brothers, it can be accessed by smooth teakwood steps that lead to an upper chamber. Caretaker Govind looks after the lighthouse and its impressive polished antique lights, gleaming copper cans and mirrored discs. A door opens out to a narrow wraparound balcony that offers magnificent views of the sea and the coconut covered coastline. ■

#Awesom Karnataka



Western Ghats

There's no better place to commune with nature than among the landscapes of India's top bio-diversity hotspot





The entrance to the Kukke Subrahmanya temple

KUKKE SUBRAHMANYA

SACRED EARTH IN THE HILLS

■ NANDINI SRINIVASAN

If you live in a city and your worst nightmare is a car breakdown or flat tyre, it'll do you good to get acquainted with Girigaddhe Bhatt. He lives 2,000 ft above sea level and climbs up and down the hill everyday. The contented smile on his face, and on every person living in the ghats of Dakshina Kannada who accepts life as nature bestows, told me a hundred things that not even a thousand 'Art of Living' sessions would have drilled into my head.

As you get off NH48 at Sakleshpur for Kukke Subrahmanya, you can only see green and more green. If you are extra sensitive and happen to drive to Subrahmanya in the rains, you might just find, every so often, your breath caught in your throat. The munificence of the monsoon on display all around will make male egos realise why nature is personified as a woman.

Kukke Subrahmanya is primarily a place of pilgrimage; but even if you're an atheist, you may well be led to believe that there has to be a superhuman creator behind such

green splendour. For the theists, can there be a more beautiful place to sit and pray?

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

Myths about the slithering reptile abound in India. The snake, in its various moods, is attributed with having the power to make such crucial decisions as to whether one will bear children, suffer from skin ailments or strokes of ill luck. In most of Karnataka, the first destination for childless couples is Kukke Subrahmanya, where special naga pujas are undertaken to seek the blessings of the Snake God, who dwells here along with the son of Shiva, Kumaraswamy and his wife Devasena. Legend has it that the Serpent King Vasuki had undertaken a penance on Kumara Parvatha nearby. When Lord Kumaraswamy — or Subrahmanya — came here after winning a battle against the demon Tarakasura, Vasuki prayed that the lord would stay here with him permanently. His wish was granted and Vasuki enjoys all the pujas and reverences Lord Subrahmanya is entitled to. Both the serpent king and the lord were brought down the hill in a basket (*kukke*), which is why the place is called Kukke Subrahmanya.

The **Subrahmanya Temple** is set against the backdrop of the Kumara Parvatha Hills, with shops and temple choultries lining the road leading to the temple. **Kashikatte**, the main entrance, is lined by shrines of Hanuman and Ganapathi.

A huge quadrangle leads you to the main deity — Sri Subrahmanya with the serpent god protecting him. The silver idols gleam within the darkness of the sanctum sanctorum. The **Vedavyasa Samputa Narasimha Temple** is south-east of the main temple within the quadrangle. The holy **Sringeri** and **Subrahmanya mutts** are also situated within the temple complex.

About a 100m from the main temple is the **temple of Adi Subrahmanya**. A huge anthill here is a popular attraction. Nearby is a **shrine to goddess Hosaligamma**, the bodyguard of Sri Subrahmanya. ♦**Timings** 7 am-1.30 pm, 3.30-8.30 pm **Abhishekh timings** 9.30-10 am (get your slip by 8.30 am)

Biladwara

Literally meaning 'the door of the hole', this is a cave about half a kilometre from the Subrahmanya Temple. Legend has it that Vasuki, the Serpent King, hid here to protect himself from Garuda, the golden

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→ FAST FACTS

When to go September to May. The rains add a sensuous touch to Subrahmanya and the surrounding ghats. Special Car festivals are held during December in Subrahmanya and during April in Dharmasthala
STD code 08257

Bird King and vehicle of Vishnu, and undertook a penance to invoke divine protection. There is nothing very interesting here, unless you feel elated about having walked past the place where the serpent god slithered. Others can give it a miss.

Kumara Parvatha

Kukke Subrahmanya and its surroundings are indeed a trekker's paradise. The majestic hills stand 4,000 ft above sea level, their green folds sending a seductive invitation to trekkers to explore their rocky terrain and thick forest belts. The base of Kumara Parvatha is a 5-km walk from town. At the end of Bisle Ghat, where the borders of Coorg, Dakshin Kannada and Hassan districts meet, a difficult 25-km trek through the forest will take you to the top of Kumara Parvatha.

Half way up the peak, at 2,000 ft, is **Girigaddhe**, where Girigaddhe Bhatt lives with his family. Three generations of the family have stayed here in the sole house on the hill, which offers rest to trekkers. The Bhatt family have a neat thatched hut, grow vegetables, have their own cattle for milk supply and are a contented lot. They aren't bothered by the absence of electricity or any connection with the world below. Everything is so fresh here, right from the plantain leaves that are laid out for lunch and the vegetables and greens that go into it. Your enthusiasm for the better things in life is completely revived when you see the women cook so zealously for the trekkers. Their pickles and *papads* are lip-smacking.

The road to the Bhatt household in the foothills is very slippery and muddy and thickly forested. Yet, the Bhatt family climb to their hillside house in just 1½ hrs while even habitual trekkers take not less than 4 hrs. Trekkers camp a little away from the Bhatt household. Water can't be had anywhere on the mountain, so fill up here and carry enough water up with you.

The trek to the top of Kumara Parvatha begins a few yards away from the house. Though **Mullaiyanagiri** is the highest peak in Karnataka, Kumara Parvatha is said to be the toughest trek. The path upto Girigaddhe is quite do-able for beginners, but the path beyond is daunting. A 40-foot-tall rock at the peak marks the end of your trek. The view below is



PRASHANT PANJIAR

Pilgrims feed an elephant at the Kukke Subrahmanya Temple

spectacular. More than 6,000 people from all over India trek up to Kumara Parvatha every year.

Write to the Bhatt household at Girigaddhe Bhatt, Girigaddhe House, Subrahmanya Post, Sullya Taluk-574238, Dakshin Kannada, and tell them of your visit in advance. Stay is free, there's space in the yard for 50 people and food is offered at a nominal sum. You can also call Girigaddhe Bhatt at a Kukke Subrahmanya number (Tel: 08257-281501, Mobile: 09448647947) between 3.30 and 4 pm, when he's in town.

Bisle Ghat

If you don't do the drive up the winding roads of Bisle Ghat, you will live to repent your mistake. For, every inch along this 28-km route is

a visual treat, unfolding a new marvel of nature at every turn.

The road from Kashikatte, near the police station, takes you to this wonderful stretch. The wide sky above gets gradually blocked out by the thick trees all round and just when you think the road is going to get darker, the forest clears very quickly, bathing you in welcome sunshine. The water from the source of the **Kumaradhara River** cascades down at numerous places, creating little waterfalls en route.

Half way up the ghat, stop on the bridge and step out of the car to take in a truly spectacular sight. Water flows down in a strong current under the bridge forming a stream. The sight of the clear water gushing over huge rocks on either side of the bridge is a photographer's delight. A

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→ GETTING THERE

Road The route to Kukke Subrahmanya is along NH4 to Nelamangala, and then NH48 (Mangaluru Highway), to Sakleshpur via Kunigal and Hassan. Turn left at Sakleshpur to Subrahmanya.

Bus KSRTC runs regular buses from Bengaluru's Majestic Bus Stand

En route halts Stop to bask in the greenery around and drink chai at wayside hotels, or pull in at one of the many restaurants in Hassan

PRASHANT PANJIAR



The revered statue of Bahubali at Dharmasthala

few kilometres from here, you can see a watchtower. Another excellent viewpoint, even if you can't climb up the tower. The clouds drift by so close you feel you can almost catch them. Look closely at the mountains across and you'll see waterfalls in at least three places.

About 7 km from here is a Forest Department office. A few steps away and, wow, you're on a small swing bridge, with the Kumaradhara flowing below. At the 28th km (the road continues to Sakleshpur), there is the welcome iron arch of the Forest Department to your right. Walk in for a breathtaking view. If you are lucky you can even spot elephants, bison and deer drinking from the river. You cannot drive up Bisle Ghat between 5 pm and 8 am, when it becomes lonely and also

unsafe due to wildlife. Do get back before dark and carry along water and eatables.

WHERE TO EAT

The temple serves free meals on all days, except Ekadasi, till 2 pm and again in the night till 9.30 pm. **Neo Mysore Café** and **Hotel Raghavendra** offer delicious tiffin. Try Mangalore bajjis. Mayura Residency serves delicious veg meals at its in-house **Kumarakrupa Restaurant**.

WHERE TO STAY

Subrahmanya is a small place so don't expect very upmarket accommodation. The temple runs choultries and guest houses. Contact **Temple Lodges** (Tel: 08257-281224;

Tariff: ₹100-1,200) to book rooms at any of the lodges (Akshara, Ashlesha, Skandakrupa, Kumarkrupa and Kartikeya) and guest houses. But these are not for the finicky.

Sheshnag Ashraya (Tel: 281215/19; Tariff: ₹800-1,850), a private hotel, is the best option. It offers non-AC and AC accommodation with TV, plus all necessary facilities including hot water in the taps from 6 am to 8 am. The KSTDC-approved **Hotel Mayura Residency** (Tel: 281336; Tariff: ₹520-1,080) is barely 100m from the Subrahmanya Temple, and is comfortably equipped for visitors.

For details, see *Kukke Subrahmanya Accommodation Listings on page 440*

AROUNDS

Dharmasthala (62 km)

The distinctive feature of Dharmasthala is that, though the presiding deity here is Lord Manjunatha — an incarnation of Lord Shiva — a family of Jains has been at the helm of affairs here for more than 500 years. The Heggade clan's *annadhanam* scheme provides food every day for everyone who comes here — 10,000 people are fed here with 2,500 kg of rice cooked every day.

From Kukke, get back on to NH48 and turn left towards Mangaluru. Drive till the forested section at Periasanthi, then turn right. Three kilometres later, at Kokkad Circle, turn right again. Watch out for the signboard 2 km down the road, then turn right again onto SH38 to Dharmasthala.

A 39-foot-high **statue of Lord Bahubali**, carved out of a single piece of stone, stands majestically a few yards away from the **Manjunatha Temple**. The 170-kg statue was brought here from Karkala in 1982. ♦**Timings** 7 am-2 pm, 7-9 pm ♦**Abhishek timings** 8.30-11.30 am

The **Manjunatha Temple Trust** (Tel: 08256-277121/ 41; Tariff: ₹100-1,000) has set up 3 dharamshalas and 8 modern guest houses for pilgrims. The numerous 'hotels' here are for light breakfast and snacks only.

Further down from the temple you will find the interesting **Car Museum** with its line-up of 60 vintage cars, all in running condition. The custom-built car of the King of Mysuru Sri Jayachamarajendra Wodeyar, a **Daimler Double Six** (1949) stands majestically amidst other models like the **Chevrolet Impala** (1962) and **Jaguar** (1951) in the portico.

♦**Timings** 9.30 am-1 pm, 2.30-6 pm ■

#Awesomekarnataka





SHUTTERSTOCK

SRINGERI

HERMITAGE UPON A HILL

■ DBN MURTHY AND VIMALA MURTHY

The enchanting pilgrim centre of Sringeri nestles in the lush forests of the Western Ghats. Washed by the holy waters of the River Tunga, peace and serenity reign here. The rain gods are kind to the region too. Serenaded by generous monsoons, verdant Sringeri is reached by a hill road from Bengaluru that passes through aromatic herb and coffee plantations, which throw up a spectacular display of flowers in the month of May. The road from Mangaluru is no less beautiful, for it takes the traveller

via the Kudremukh National Park, along the course of River Tunga, with a small stream near its origin. Thousands of devotees visit Sringeri year after year, to return with a sense of fulfilment and spiritual renewal. Indeed, the mystique of Sringeri is better experienced than explained. Sringeri is, quite simply, a joy for the eyes and a balm for the soul. It is where Nature is truly God and God is Nature.

LEGENDS AND MYTHOLOGY

Sringeri gets its name from Sage Rishyasringa, son of Sage Vibhandaka.

Tunga River

Rishyasringa was born of a deer, with horns on his forehead. The hermitage was his home and his world. He later brought rain to the neighbouring kingdom of Romapada and married the king's daughter. It was Sage Rishyasringa whose blessings King Dasaratha invoked at the Putrakameshti Yagna (sacrificial prayer performed for progeny), and obtained four sons.

Legend has it that Adi Shankara chose Sringeri when he was searching for a suitable place to establish his first mutt. It's said that he was struck by the sanctity of this beautiful spot when he saw the unusual sight of a hooded cobra protecting a frog in labour from the

heat of the sun. A place that could infuse such love between natural enemies must surely be a hallowed one, where he could establish his mutt.

Why was Sarada the *ishta devata* (favourite deity) of Shankara? Legend has it that Sarada was none other than Saraswati, consort of Sage Durvasa, who was cursed by Sage Ubhaya Bharathi. She married Mandana Mishra of Mahishpatipura, a renowned Vedic scholar. She was redeemed from her curse after she was defeated in a theological debate, along with Mandana Mishra, by Shankara, who, it is believed, was an incarnation of Shiva. When Shankara requested her to stay back, the Divine Mother promised to

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→ FAST FACTS

When to go All year round. The nine-day Dasara/ Navaratri festivities in Oct, and Maha Shivaratri, Ram Navami, Saraswati Puja and the Aradhana (birthday celebrations) of the Jagadguru draw huge crowds.

Tourist office

● Office of the Assistant Director 📍
Department of Tourism
Vimal Niwas Bldg., Near Kote Circle,
Belur Road, Chikamagalur
Tel: 08262-228493
Cell: 09481311946 (DTC)
STD code 08265

reside on earth wherever Shankara invoked her. He did so in Sringeri.

Associated with the Mallikarjuna Temple is another legend. It is said that fervent prayers — either for rains to start or stop — will be answered without fail here. Ever since the great Adi Shankara set up his first mutt in Sringeri, spirituality has flourished uninterrupted in this holy place.

ARCHITECTURE AND ANTIQUITY

The Sarada Temple was an ordinary construction until it was renovated

in 1906 to become the present, elegant granite structure it is. An ambulatory passage, a vestibule and an open, spacious central hall with three entrances now surround the original sanctum. The shrine has an impressive gopuram built in the Dravidian style. The sanctum houses two metallic idols of Sri Saradamba made of panchaloha, the larger one believed to have been installed by Vidyathirtha in the 14th century.

Built in 1356, the architectural elegance and sculptural grandeur of the Vidya-Shankara Temple stands as a testimony to the genius of the Hoysala, Vijayanagar and Dravidian styles of temple design and architecture. Built in the shape of a chariot, the Vidya-Shankara Temple contains, in exquisitely carved stones, the very essence of the Yoga Sastras and astronomy. The 12 pillars in the hall represent the zodiac signs, on which the sun's rays fall according to the order of the solar months in a marvellous synthesis of architecture and astronomy.

ORIENTATION

It is easy to cover distances in this small town. The most celebrated among Sringeri temples are the Sarada Temple and the Vidya-Shankara Temple. Guru Nivas, across the river, is the dwelling place of the pontiff of the Sringeri Mutt. Perched atop a hillock is the less visited Shiva temple of Bettada Malahani-kareswara, popularly known as Mal-likarjuna. The Sarada Temple, the



Sharadhamba Temple in all its glory

Vidya-Shankara Temple and the Guru Nivas are walking distance from the bazaar and the bus station. The ornate gate at the entrance holds the promise of a great experience for pilgrims. Autos charge ₹10-15 for the 1-km ride to the main temple complex from the bus stand. On the main Bharati Street is the ancient Sri Chappara Anjaneya Temple and the Sri Parsawanath Tirthankara Jain Temple, which are worth a visit. These are at walking distance from Sarada Temple's main gate. Torana Ganapathi, Kere Anjaneya, Malayala Brahma and Adi Shankara are the other temples that can be covered in 2-3 hrs by auto.

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

One complete day with an overnight stay should suffice in Sringeri.

Sarada Temple

Sri Saradamba, the presiding deity of Sringeri, is revered in popular imagination as the embodiment of Goddess Saraswati, though the opinion proffered by some scholars is that she has a separate identity. The temple is associated with the Sringeri Mutt. Goddess Sarada is seated on the Sriyantra, carrying the rosary, vessel and book in three hands with the fourth hand held in a gesture of protection. There are two smaller idols, the utsavamurthis, one in silver and the other in bronze.

Sarada is Guru Rupini; through the person of the Jagadguru she dispenses her grace. Sarada is the saguna form of the Supreme Absolute. Resplendent in alankara of matchless beauty, her impeccably and unusually pleated sari fans out in absolute symmetry, while her

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→ GETTING THERE

Air Nearest airport: Bajpe Airport, Mangaluru (100km/2-3 hr). Taxi to Sringeri costs ₹ 2,000-2,500 (return); KSRTC Volvo bus fare: ₹120/ Regular/ private bus: ₹120-750

Rail Nearest railhead: Shimoga (95 km/2-3 hr) is connected to major cities by direct trains like Bangalore Express, Mysore Express, etc. Bus fare to Sringeri is ₹100; taxi costs ₹ 2,000-2,500 (return)

Road Sringeri is well connected by road to Chikamagalur, Udupi, Hassan, Shimoga, Birur, Agumbe, Mangaluru, Bengaluru and other cities in Karnataka

Bus KSRTC buses ply regularly from Bengaluru (320km/8-9 hr/ ₹120-750), there are private buses from Mangaluru (100km/2-3hrs/₹100-120); from Udupi (85km/ 2-3hrs/₹80-90)

glowing diamond nose-ring almost seems to illuminate the temple. The pilgrim is mesmerised by her divine smile and would want nothing more than to gaze at her in humble supplication.

The utsavamurti is taken in a procession around the sanctum, in a silver chariot, before the temple's closure every night. This grand ceremony is not to be missed.

◆Location 1 km south of the bus stand on the main street of Sringeri Darshan Timings 6 am-2 pm, 4-9 pm; Mahamangalaarti timings: 10.30 am, 12.30 pm, 8.45 pm Seva There is no fee for entrance or for special darshan. Sevas are between 7.30 am and 1 pm and 5.30 and 8.30 pm.

Kigga

This is a lovely wooded small town with the River Nandini nearby, 9 km from Sringeri. The sanctum of the Sringeswara Temple here houses a linga of a unique shape, with three protuberances resembling horns — hence the name Sringeswara. The temple belongs to the Vijayanagara period and is built in granite. The Nandi idol of the temple is a fine piece of architecture. On the Narasimha Parvata hillock nearby is a shrine for Narasimhadevaru, with two small sacred tanks nearby. Avoid climbing the hill during the rains, as the pathway is not safe.

You can journey to Kigga by hailing an autorickshaw which takes around 30 mins. Buses from Sringeri to Kigga run every half hour.

Contact Office Administrator (Tel: 08265-250192, 250594; [W](http://www.sringeri.net) sringeri.net) for performing seva, on advance payment

TIP Photography, mobile phones and smoking are strictly prohibited

Vidya-Shankara Temple

As the pilgrim enters the temple complex, the stunning sight of the Vidya-Shankara Temple, with its majestic *gopuram* soaring into the sky, meets his eye. This grand temple was built over the mortal remains of Vidyathirtha, the teacher of Vidyaranya. The saint-guru of the founder-brothers of the Vijayanagara Empire, Harihara and Bukka, Vidyaranya is a legendary figure in the history of Karnataka. The imposing granite structure of the Vidya-Shankara Temple looks from certain angles like a chariot about to commence its celestial journey. There are 104 sculptured images executed in Hoysala style. On the floor is a large stone on which a circle is drawn with lines corresponding to the shadow of the pillar as it falls during each month — a truly stupendous astronomical feat. The Shivling known as Vidya-Shankara, installed over the samadhi, is worshipped daily. There are five cells to house the images of Vidya-Ganapati, Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesvara and Durga. Don't miss the broken wooden image of Saradamba, believed to be the original one installed by Shankaracharya. An 'approved' guide, identifiable by a badge, provides fluent commentary to visitors in Kannada and English.



Sky-high: Vidya-shankar temple with its majestic gopuram

◆Location Within the same complex, by the banks of the River Tunga
Timings 7.30am-1pm, 5pm-8.30pm
Puja timings The morning and evening pujas are conducted at both Vidyashankara and Mallikarjuna temples. Devotees can also offer pujas on payment. **Contact** Cell: 09818536378; Tel: 08265-250123

Mallikarjuna Temple

This ancient temple is a shrine to Shiva known as Malahanikaresvara (popularly referred to as Mallikarjuna), destroyer of the impurities of the *jiva*. It is reputed to be as old as the Ramayana. Records say that the early

structure was renovated by Puttapayya in 1621. Inside the sanctum is a large black-stone Shivling, believed to be *swayambhu*. It is in this temple that Shri Abhinava Nrisimha Bharati (1600-1623), then head of the Sringeri Mutt, drew a figure of Lord Ganesha with a piece of turmeric on a pillar, and worshipped it in the absence of an image of the deity. Since that time, the outline of the god gradually bulged out in relief. This Ganapati is called Kambada Ganapati — Ganapati of the pillar. The temple is reached by a flight of about 150 steps, which are not too difficult to negotiate. The shrine

PRASHANT PANJIAR

slowly emerges into view as you climb higher. Early mornings or late evenings are ideal to be at the top. Darshan is peaceful as few pilgrims visit the place.

TIP Be wary of slippery moss during the monsoons. Those unable to climb the steps can opt for autos to the top through a winding, rough road, for a fee of ₹30. On Kartika Purnima day, Deepothsavam is celebrated on a grand scale

◆**Location** In the heart of town, on a hillock
Timings 7 am-1 pm, 5-8 pm

Guru Nivas

The Sringeri Mutt has always commanded the highest veneration. The present 36th Jagadguru is His

At the renowned Sringeri Mutt



APOORVA SALKADE

Holiness Sri Bharati Tirtha Mahaswamigal, who lives in the Guru Nivas across the river over the Vidya Tirtha Setu. As you cross the bridge, you enter a garden full of areca, coconut and fruit trees. This is the sacred Narasimha Vana. An aura of holiness and peace envelops you as you enter the garden. The River Tunga can be a gentle stream or a rushing torrent as and when the season dictates.

Explore the garden; understand that flowers and fruits are not for plucking. Tread carefully — snakes may not be as kind as during the times of Shankara! The self-radiant Sphatika Chandramouleeswara is kept in the guru's personal custody, and is worshipped every day. Nearby are three Adhishtanam (samadhis) of past Jagadgurus. Not to be missed is the audience given by Sri Bharati Tirtha, himself an eminent scholar of the Vedas and sastras.

◆**Timings** 10.30 am-12.30 pm, 5.30-6.30 pm **Related info** If men want to receive the tirtha prasada (offering of holy water) from the Jagadguru, they must remove their upper garments and stand in a line. Women have no dress code but must stand in a separate line.

Other temples

Chappara Anjaneya, Parsawanath Tirthankara Jain Temple (on the main Bharati Street), Torana Ganapati, Kere Anjaneya, Malayala Brahma and Adi Shankara are some of the other holy temples that figure on the extensive itinerary of the pilgrim to Sringeri.

M BALAN/ SOUTH INDIA PICTURE



A bathing ghat on the river Tunga

WHILE IN SRINGERI

A walk through the temple town, which takes about 45 mins, can be a rewarding experience. A walk on the banks of the River Tunga is exhilarating. Fishing is not allowed here. The river should not be polluted with remnants of puja materials and other litter. Enjoy a bath in the river but avoid using soap. A short walk behind the Guru Nivas takes you to the Sri Sadvidya Sanjeevini Sanskrit Maha Pathashala Kendra, a wood-and-tiles marvel in acoustics, with each classroom soundproofed. This residential school for boys trains about 100 students to be well versed in the Vedas and sastras. Try to visit the Jatropa

Krishi Kendra, a few metres from the Sarada Temple. Personnel might be away on field trips but will educate anyone interested in their bio-diesel project.

SHOPPING

Shop for Malnad specialities like midi mango (tiny, whole mangoes) pickles, pure honey, amla (gooseberry) oil, jackfruit pappad, banana chips, mango and tamarind tokku (a spicy preserve). A few shops on Bharati Street sell these (look out for large signboards). Handicrafts such as sandalwood items make good gifts. Visit the Vidya Bharati Bookstall run by the mutt to pick up books, cassettes, CDs, posters and other souvenirs.

WHERE TO EAT

Behind the Sarada Temple is the mutt's huge dining hall where pilgrims are served meals. The daily annadana (free distribution of food) is a special feature of Sringeri. It's considered as temple prasada and so, wasting of food is frowned upon. Basic food consisting of rice, huli, saru (curry made with lentils and vegetables), and buttermilk, is served twice a day on shining stainless steel plates, in the scrupulously clean dining hall. The modern kitchen, where rice is steam-cooked, can cater to 3,000 pilgrims daily. All are welcome. There is no dress code. It is recommended that devotees have at least one meal here for it is essential to the experience of a pilgrim.

A refreshing drink while temple hopping



PRASHANT PANJIAR

A number of 'mess'-style eating places such as **Akshaya Mess**, **Annapurna Mess** and **Apoorva Mess**, located on the two main streets of the town, serve basic South Indian food and snacks at reasonable rates. Hot and simple food is what you get. A mini-thali includes rice, sambhar, rasam and vegetables (chappati on request) for about ₹40. Only veg food is served.

Hotel Sannidhi, at the end of Bharati Street, and **Kamat Restaurant**, on Mallikarjuna Street, are recommended for snacks. These are fairly clean and dish out standard fare at reasonable rates. Don't miss their good, typical South Indian filter coffee. Service is quick and friendly. Set-dosa, a plate of four small, spongy dosas served with butter, chutney and sambhar, is a speciality not to be missed. Garlic-free dishes are served on request. Red chutney in the masala dosa usually has garlic, as does the rasam served with the meals.

Narthaki Bar, located on the ground floor of **Hotel Shubhodhaya** on Bharati Street, is an unpretentious joint that serves alcoholic drinks, veg and non-veg food. The ambience is not too great but the food is reasonably good.

WHERE TO STAY

The **Sringeri Mutt** offers as many as 500 rooms in its guest house, and dormitory accommodation in dharamshalas, which can be booked at the Tourist Reception Centre (Tel: 08265-250123, 250594; Tariff: ₹100-



ANURAG MALLICK

Horanadu

Horanadu is nestled in a picturesque setting of forests and hills. The Annapurnesvari Temple here, 8 km from Silent Valley Resort, is a popular pilgrim destination. Annadana is performed twice a day with basic food of rice, saru, huli and buttermilk. According to legend, Sage Agasthya installed the idol here. The temple was renovated in 1675. A new idol of Adisakti has been installed in the sanctum. The shrine has unusual rituals — there is puja only in the afternoon and at night, except in December when puja is performed thrice a day. The kumkum used here for worship has medicinal value and

diseases in plants and animals can be treated with it.

The Kaleshwar Temple dedicated to Shiva is on a hillock, 4 km from Horanadu. Another half a kilometre further is the Girijamba Temple, which holds a 3-day Girija Kalyanotsav festival celebrating the marriage of Kaleshwar and Girijamba just after Diwali. A gold idol, kept in the Mudigere treasury, is taken out every year for this festival.

Horanadu can be accessed by buses and taxis from Sringeri. Private buses run every 1 to 1½ hrs from the bus stand through the day. Taxis charge ₹1,200 for the return trip.

SHUTTERSTOCK



A devotee being blessed by the temple elephant

1,000) near the entrance of the temple complex. The rooms are spartan. You can get a Western toilet on request only. Bed sheets and blankets are provided, but no soap or towel. The fastidious are advised to carry bed sheets and pillow-covers, as cleanliness cannot be guaranteed. Hot water is available for a limited time in the mornings. Consumption of alcohol is not permitted. Stay is allowed only for a maximum of three days. There is no system of advance reservation and this facility is on a first-come-first-served basis for visitors and pilgrims alike.

There are options like **Giri Lodge** (Tel: 250485), on Bharati Street, which offer basic facilities like a

bed, fan and often a shared bathroom/ toilet. Bed linen may not meet your standards — so carry your own. Hot water is supplied on request. Service is friendly. Tariffs range from ₹300-700. A double bed room comes with an attached bathroom, which again leaves much to be desired.

The best bet is the **Hotel Shubhdhaya** (Cell: 09480947162) at the end of Bharati Street, about 1 km from the Saradamba Temple. The rooms are on the second floor, some with a good view of the river and the hills. They are clean, as are the sheets and blankets with good mattresses and though there is no AC, fans, cable TV and Western-

style toilets are available. Hot water is available only in the morning. Room service is a tad bit slow. The restaurant, Hotel Sannidhi, is one floor below, and serves hot and delicious South Indian food and lip-smacking snacks.

For more details, see Sringeri Accommodation Listings on page 444

AROUNDS

Agumbe (28 km)

This verdant high-altitude village set in seclusion in the rainforests of the gorgeous Western Ghats in Shimoga district offers a lavish banquet of nature's bounty all year round. Agumbe's numerous waterfalls come into their full glory in this vast swathe of biodiversity during the monsoon, so if you are looking to enjoy these wondrous sights on a sunny day, do have a care for the slippery terrain on the way. Of particular beauty are the thunderous Onake Abbi, Bakarna and Jogi Gundi falls. Stunning views of these lush surrounds can be had from the very popular Sunset View Point. Devotees throng to the nearby Sri Venugopala Krishna Swamy Temple while wildlife buffs head for the Someshwara Wildlife Sanctuary in the high season for tiger-spotting.

SHUTTERSTOCK



A man standing near a waterfall in Agumbe

This entire belt including the reserve forests around Kundapur, Shankaranarayana, Hosanagara, Sringeri and Thirthahalli falls under the umbrella of the Agumbe Rainforest Complex and forms one of the largest remaining contiguous forest stretches in the country. This stunning landscape is a huge draw for trekkers. Come prepared for leeches and sudden downpours and cobra sightings, as Agumbe is India's famed cobra capital. The Agumbe Rainforest Research Station has been pivotal in pioneering the world's first radio-telemetry project on the King Cobra. ■

#Awesom Karnataka





Photographs by PRASHANT PANJIAR

Pilgrims at the Mookambika Temple, which was built over a millennia ago

KOLLUR

KOLAPURA: SAGE KOLA'S HOME

■ DBN MURTHY AND VIMALA MURTHY

What sets Kollur apart from other places of pilgrimage? Famed as one of the most sacred sites in Karnataka, it's located in stunningly beautiful surroundings, reminding one of the evocative imagery of red earth and pouring rain. Lush green forests, windswept towering hills, enchanting waterfalls and gurgling rivers make Kollur — most of which is protected as the Mookambika Wildlife Sanctuary — an extraordinary experience for not only the devout but also for nature lovers as well.

Adi Shankara installed the idol of Mookambika in Kollur about 1,200 years ago. The small, square sanctum sanctorum also houses the egg-shaped Udbhava-Jyothir (self-manifested and effulgent) linga, with the Suvarna Rekha (golden streak), dividing the visible portion of the linga into two parts, the left being larger than the right, said to uniquely connote the immutable nature of Shiva and Shakti. It is believed that Goddess Mookambika, the presiding deity, merged with the linga to bless her devotees.

In the Skanda Purana, when Indra asks Vishnu to explain Shiva's

real nature, as he (Shiva) is seen in this temple in female form, Vishnu replies, "Listen, O Indra, the male and female are eternal principles of the universe. Yet they are never separate. They are as gold and the ornaments made out of it."

LEGENDS AND MYTHOLOGY

Sage Kola, from whom Kollur derives its name, was bestowed with a powerful, wish-fulfilling linga. He built a hut over it and worshipped it throughout his life. According to legend, Shukracharya, the guru of *asuras*, predicted the demise of Kumbhasura, a terrible demon, at the hands of a woman. Sage Kola, along with other holy men and divinities, prayed to the Mother Goddess for succour. Meanwhile, Kumbhasura began severe austerities to propitiate Shiva, who appeared to bless him with the immortality he sought. However, the Mother Goddess struck him dumb (mooka) before he could ask for his boon. Now called Mookasura (dumb demon), the infuriated asura began a renewed reign of terror. The Mother Goddess appeared again and this time a fierce battle ensued and she killed the wicked Mookasura at a place called Maranakatte (marana is death and katte is platform) near Kollur. However, just before he died, Mookasura repented his misdeeds and, in humble supplication, begged the Mother Goddess to stay permanently in Kollur. He also asked that his name be remembered along with hers henceforth. It is thus that

the deity here is known as Mookambika, the mother of Mooka.

Another legend says that a small portion of the sanjeevani that Hanuman was carrying for the unconscious Lakshmana fell upon this hill, even now home to many healing herbs. It is also said that Adi Shankara performed penance on the hills of Kodachadri, 40 km from Kollur. He wished to take the Mother Goddess to Kalady's repentant people, for he had cursed their small-mindedness when he had returned to Kalady to perform his mother's funeral rites. The Mother Goddess appeared before him and said she would follow him to Kalady with the stipulation that he would not look back to see if she was following. If he did, she would stop at that very spot. Shankara walked ahead, reassured by the sound of

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→ FAST FACTS

When to go Anytime throughout the year, though the monsoon months (Jun-Sep) can be very wet

Tourist office

● Office of the Assistant Director 📍
Department of Tourism
Deputy Commissioner Office Complex,
Rajathadri, A-Block, 2nd Floor,
Manipal, Udipi
Tel: 0820-2574868 (AD Office)
Cell: 08762444986 (DTC)

STD code 0820

her anklets, which ceased at Kollur. He turned around and she remained here thereafter.

ARCHITECTURE AND ANTIQUITY

The temple, excepting the sanctum, which is much older, dates back to the 12th or 13th century. Inscriptions on the walls of the inner prakara of

the temple say it was first built in 1218 by one Venkanna-samanta, son-in-law of Sankanna-samanta, who belonged to the family of the rulers of Banki. The fort of the rulers of Banki was in Halakallu, about three miles from Kollur. However, the temple has been renovated and added upon many times since. What we see today belongs largely to the Nayak period (1629-1697). The Vijayanagara rulers, great devotees of Goddess Mookambika, contributed considerably to the wealth of the temple and its popularity.

ORIENTATION

A large ornate gateway welcomes visitors to the temple town of Kollur. The beautiful River Souparnika flows a kilometre north of the Mookambika Temple. From the bus stand (2 km to the north) to the temple, autorickshaws can be hired for ₹10-15. The guest houses and the bazaar are about a 100m away from the bus stand and a comfortable walk from the temple. Footwear stands are available outside the temple for a small fee.

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

One full day with an overnight halt should suffice at Kollur.

Mookambika Temple

The gurgling of a mountain stream in the background rings in the ears of the pilgrim as he enters the revered Mookambika Temple. One of the major Shakti shrines in the country,

ALAMY IMAGES / INDIA PICTURE



Souparnika River, originating in Kodachadri Hills, flows by Kollur

Kollur draws many practitioners of Tantra too.

Behind the linga, on a raised platform, is the large panchaloha (five precious metals) icon of the four-armed Mookambika, considered to be one of the best in the country. The deity looks as she appeared in Adi Shankara's vision. Seated in the lotus posture, she carries the chakra (discus) and sankha (conch) in her two upper hands, and holds her other two hands in the gesture of abhaya mudra (protection) and varada mudra (boon-bestowal). It is an image of exquisite beauty.

In the outer ambulatory passage is a shrine to Veerabhadra Swamy. He is the kshetrapala, the protector of the temple. The Subrahmanya Swamy Temple is on the other side.

Nearby is Saraswati Mantap, the very spot at which Adi Shankara is believed to have composed the superb hymn, the Soundarya-Lahari. Artistes come here to seek Saraswati's blessings. At the Chowdeswari Temple, to the north, is the kshetrapalani (the female divinity that protects the holy temple). In the outer ambulatory passage, apart from several kinds of interesting smaller shrines, a magnificent golden chariot is on display.

The puja rituals are a combination of Vedic and Tantric rites. Devotees enter the sanctum in orderly queues. Kollur is free of touts or pujaris hassling the pilgrims. Everything is clean, orderly and systematic.

◆ **Location** 2 km north of bus stand and 100m north of bazaar and guest

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→ GETTING THERE

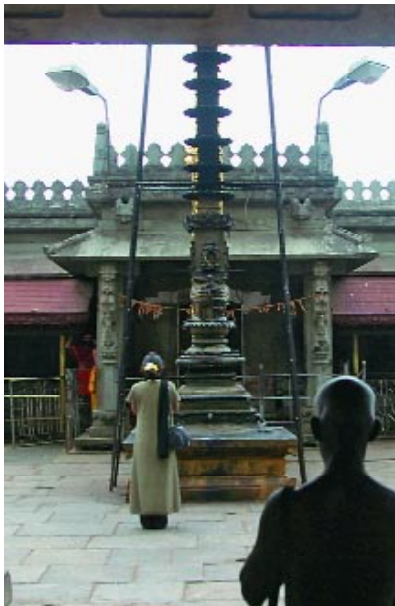
Air Nearest Airport: Bajpe Airport, Mangaluru (105km/3½hr). Taxi to Sri Mookambika Temple costs ₹3,500-4,600; Private bus fare from Mangaluru to Kollur is ₹156.

Rail Nearest Railhead: Byndoor Mookambika Road Railway Station (30km/45min) is connected by direct trains like Netravati, Matsyagandha, Poorna, Coimbatore-Jabalpur Express, etc to all the major cities on the Konkan Railway line. Taxi fare from railway station to Temple is ₹700-900

Road Kollur is well connected by road to Bengaluru, Mangaluru, Kundapur and other cities in Karnataka **Bus** KSRTC Volvo bus are available only till Kundapur. Bengaluru-Kundapur (9-10 hr/₹465-1,058), Mangaluru-Kundapur (2hr/₹97-353). From Kundapur one has to take a private bus to Sri Mookambika Temple, Kollur. Private buses ply regularly on Kundapur-Hemmadi route; Bus fare from Mangaluru: ₹156

houses **Timings** 5am-7:15am, 7:45am-11:30am, 12pm-12:20pm, 12:45pm-1:30pm, 3pm-5pm, 5pm-9pm **Temple Tel** 08254-258521-2/ 221 **W** mookambikatemple.org Sevas and darshan Special darshan (ticket: ₹25) is through the sacred west (Shankara) gate, from where Adi Shankara is said to have first stepped into the temple. Dantadhavana (a ritual ablution) puja is performed at 7 am followed by Udaya (dawn) puja at 7.30 am. Pradosha mangalaarti (popularly called the salaam mangal- aarti as Tipu Sultan, ruler of Mysore, saluted the devi with a salaam during his visit to Kollur) is held between 7.15 and 7.30 pm. Mahamangalaarti is at 12.30 and 7.30 pm. A unique feature is the kashaya mangalaarti

Mookambika Temple's Shakti shrines



(performed with a medicinal decoction prepared from spices and herbs) and kashaya neivedya distribution (7.30-8.30 pm). A tirtha bottle costs ₹5 at the counter. The Rathotsava (chariot festival) in Apr-May, Onam in Sep and the exultant nine-day Navaratri festival draw great crowds. In Nov-Dec there is a special Vanabhajana (forest-food) Habba (festival), when the alankara of the devi is very special and the Souparnika River and the forest are worshipped **TIP** Men must remove their upper garment while entering the sanctum. Cell phones and photography are not allowed inside

Other temples

A pujari will perform the puja for the vana (forest) devatas and devis at Masti Katte, 2 km north of the Mookambika Temple, within 5m of the main road, and explain their significance. An autorickshaw can be engaged for the round-trip (₹30). The Balamuri Ganapati Temple (open 5 am-1.30 pm, 3-9.30 pm), 10m to the west of the Mookambika Temple, in a side lane, houses a beautiful, white marble idol of Lord Ganesha, set at a higher level so that devotees may easily witness all the pujas. This temple is also known as Beedhi (Street) Ganapati.

WHILE IN KOLLUR

The scenic beauty of Kollur makes visiting it a delightful experience. A bath in the roga nivarini (remover of ill-health, as the water flows through forests of herbs) River Souparnika is a



Colourful masks and dolls at Kollur Bazaar

cleansing experience. Just walking along the Souparnika River, with its clear waters, can be very relaxing. There is a self-operated rain gauge as well as a conventional one at the PWD Inspection Bungalow (near the guest houses), which is worth a brief visit. Sri Ramachandra Mutt, with its lovely Amruthadhara Goshala, is 6 1/2 km east of the temple (₹70-100 by an autorickshaw).

SHOPPING

A few Malnad and Kerala specialities like appam (soft, deep-fried jaggery sweet), pineapple, khajur (fig) and banana halwa taste great and are worth buying in the shops of the bazaar. Pick up bottles of honey for family and friends.

WHERE TO EAT

The daily annadana (free food) takes place in the dining hall inside the Mookambika Temple complex, to the west. The meal comprises of rice, sambhar, saru (rasam), payasa (kheer, in the morning only), vegetable curry and buttermilk. Rice is cooked in five huge 100 kg containers by steam heating.

◆ Timings 11.30am-2pm, 7.45-9.30 pm

A number of restaurants and cafés in the bazaar, north of the temple and within 300m, serve veg South Indian snacks and food. Eateries in this area, like Hotel Sri Akshaya, Hotel Devi Dharshini, Sri Mookambika Canteen, Hotel Reshma and Hotel Vishwas provide



Elephants are considered holy here

veg thali meals for about ₹20. Devi Dharshini is recommended for slightly better food and cleanliness. Note: All directions refer to the observer facing the Sri Mookambika Temple (sanctum) or the bus stand.

WHERE TO STAY

The temple authorities provide decent accommodation to pilgrims in their guest houses. Allotment of rooms is strictly on a first-come-first-served basis. These guest houses (two floors, no lift) are a 10-min walk north from the Mookambika Temple. Do not expect much by way of service or cleanliness. **Swarnambika** (Tel: 08254-258221), situated near the bus stand, is very basic. About

400m north of the Mookambika Temple is **Lalithambika** (Tel: 258328; Tariff: ₹200-600), a modern guest house, built recently and in good condition. The bed linen is clean. Extra sheets are provided on request. Hot water is supplied on request and payment. AC rooms (with TV and geyser) are also available. There is a canteen on the ground floor that serves coffee, tea, snacks and thali meals. Other guest houses include the reasonably clean **Mata Chatra** (Tel: 258221; Tariff: ₹200), and **Souparnika** (Tel: 258221; Tariff: ₹150-300).

There are also many private lodges, including the excellent **Abimon Residency International Boutique Hotel** (Tel: 258544;

Tariff: ₹1,600-5,124), which offers 18 rooms. **Mookambika Palace** (Tel: 258560; Tariff: ₹2,239-4,000 + breakfast) has 36 comfortable rooms. Smaller private hotels are located about a 5-10 min walk from the temple and are located in the bazaar, north of the main temple.

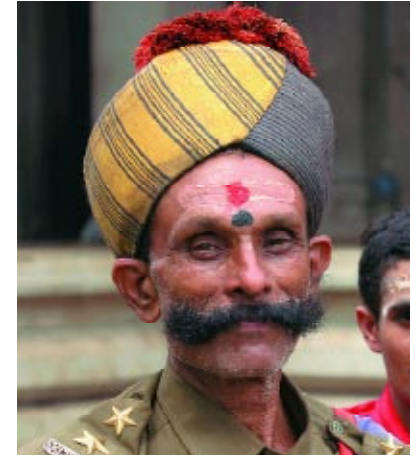
For more hotels see Kollur Accommodation Listings on page 440

AROUNDS

Kodachadri Hills (40 km E)

Equated in greatness to the Sanjeevani Parvata that Hanuman carried for the wounded Lakshmana, a part of which is said to have fallen here, the name Kodachadri is derived from kutaja, a medicinal plant found in abundance here. Today, drug manufacturing units source medicinal plants and shrubs from here. The life-giving Souparnika River takes its birth from this holy spot. Among the holiest places in Kodachadri is the Sarvagna Peetha, where Adi Shankara meditated. From here, the view of the surroundings areas, including the Jog Falls, Arabian Sea, Kollur Town and the forests is breathtaking.

The journey up the mountains to Kodachadri is not easy. Only jeeps ply on this route. The monsoon



A security guard poses for the camera

months are considerably tougher with the added hazards of leeches and roadblocks. Allow at least half a day, if not longer for this spectacular trip.

Maranakatte (21 km)

It's considered auspicious for a pilgrim to first visit Maranakatte before having a darshan of Goddess Mookambika (see *Legends and Mythology on pages 285-286*). The Brahma Kunda stream, flowing north of this temple, enhances its scenic beauty. It would be best to visit en route Mookambika if travelling by taxi, or hire one later to get here.

◆ Timings 6 am-1.30 pm, 3-8.30 pm ■





Photographs by PRASHANT PANJIAR

KUDREMUKH

THE MOCHA MOUNTAINS

■ ANURADHA KUMAR AND
SUSHEELA NAIR

On the route to Kudremukh it's a good idea to keep the driver caffeinated, though it'll always be the scenery that'll wake up the senses here. As you go beyond Chikkamagaluru and to the windward side of the Malnad coffee hills, the difference in the scenery would be apparent. Coffee trees that still await the first shower in Chikkamagaluru are drenched in

white blossoms in Kudremukh. With no apparent effort, the land here grows coffee, palms, cardamom and mango, with quite a few hills also given over to mosaic-like tea plantations. Kudremukh is a landscape designed entirely by rain and there is an ease to life in these parts that is obvious in the freshly painted villages and the clean streets.

But nature is not the only performer in these parts. Ask for coffee on this drive and your taciturn

Tea bushes at Kudremukh

petrol pump attendant will immediately slip into a first world act. Wiping hands, he will don disposable plastic gloves and proceed to serve excellent machine-brewed stuff in golden yellow Coffee Day cups that have spill-proof lids on them. The price makes a statement too; coffee is cheaper than tea in these parts.

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

Kudremukh town was set up entirely by the Kudremukh Iron Ore Company Limited (KIOCL). Built



like an American town with wide open spaces and low buildings, it's a pleasant place to stay but doesn't have very many tourist spots. Most places to see around have their own dots on the map, which means a lot of driving. So this holiday is best done with your own car. If you are

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→ FAST FACTS

When to go Avoid March and April. Besides a general lack of colour in this dry season, many places are closed to visitors due to the danger of forest fires


Wildlife/Tourist Offices

- Dy Conservator of Forests  
Kudremukh Wildlife Division
Karkalla

Tel: 08258-298183

 myecotrip.com

STD code 08258

- Office of the Assistant Director 
Department of Tourism
Vimal Niwas Bldg., Near Kote Circle,
Belur Road,
Chikamagaluru

Tel: 08262-228493

Cell: 09481311946 (DTC)

STD code 08262

- Range Forest Officer 
Kudremukh NP
Wildlife Range
Kudremukh
Chikamagaluru

Tel: 08263-255998

STD codes 08263 Kudremukh, 08262
Chikamagaluru, 08258 Karkalla



Hanuman Gundi water falls inside the forest (left); Recovering Bhadra River (right)

hiring one, go for a sturdy vehicle as roads are bad in parts.

Kudremukh Peak

At 6,214 ft, this peak which means the 'horse-face hill' falls before the town and requires a small hike up. On a very, very clear day the blue edge of the Arabian Sea is visible from there. The peak is closed to visitors in March and April.

Kudremukh National Park

The park, 10 km from the town, consists mostly of evergreen rainforests and is extremely beautiful. But forests here are so thick that big game sightings are rare. Inside the park, you can stay at Jungle Lodges

Bhagawathi Nature Camp, (Bengaluru Reservation Tel: 080-40554055). The camp closes during the dry season. Inside the forest are **Hanuman Gundi Waterfalls** (16 km) and **Gangamoola** (12 km), where the Tunga, Bhadra and Netravathi rivers originate, a scenic spot one can trek up to.

WHERE TO STAY AND EAT

The **Bhagwati Nature Camp** (Bengaluru Reservations Tel: 080-40554055; Tariff: ₹1,711-2,242 + meals, forest entry charges, activities) is located inside the Kudremukh National Park. The camp has 12 rooms and dorm that sleeps 14

people (Tariff: ₹4,400-6,000, dorm ₹1,750 + meals; TE pp) Entry, trek and guide charges are inclusive with the room tariff.

The best hotel to base yourself, though, is located in Kalasa (see below).

AROUND KUDREMUKH

Kalasa (20 km)

Kalasa is a small town encircled by a host of interesting places to visit. Topping the list are the Panchatirtha, the five sacred ponds. **Rudra Tirtha** is 5 km from Silent Valley Resort. **Vasishtha Tirtha** (6 km), **Amba Tirtha** (8 km) **Varaha Tirtha** (30 km) and **Naga Tirtha** (35 km). Close to Amba Tirtha is a huge boulder called **Bheemana Kallu** that bears a Sanskrit inscription stating that **Sri Madhava-charya** (the founder of the Dvaita School of philosophy) brought and placed it here with one hand. The Kalasa trip is done easiest if you are based at **Silent Valley Corporate Resort** (Tel: 08263-274801-02; Tariff: ₹4,000-6,000, dorm ₹1,300 per person, with all meals), a hotel set amidst wonderfully natural surroundings, and also a good base for visits to Kudremukh. The **Bhadra River** is just 6 km from here. All the rooms here are individual cottages, quite pretty and self-sufficient and

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→ GETTING THERE

Air Nearest airport: Bajpe Airport, Mangaluru (100km/2 hrs). Taxi from Mangaluru to Kudremukh NP costs ₹1,500-2,000

Rail Nearest railhead: Mangaluru (100km/2 hrs). Bus fare from Mangaluru to Kudremukh NP is ₹100

Road One can drive from Mangaluru via Karkalla to Kudremukh NP (100km/2-3 hrs) **Bus** From Mangaluru (100km/2hrs) private buses ply regularly on this route. Fare: Private bus ₹100. Kudremukh is 350 km from Bengaluru and 95km from Chikmagalur.

the huge restaurant overlooks the pool. There is one dorm here.

Also in Kalasa is the **Thotadur Yathri Nivas** (Tel: 274699; Cell: 09448007014; Tariff: ₹500-990), which has a vegetarian restaurant and arranges trekking and sightseeing.

Horanadu (28 km)
(details, see Sringeri page 272)

For details, see Accommodation Listings on page 440 ■

#Awesom Karnataka





ANURAG MALLICK

Chikkamagaluru is nature's nirvana

CHIKKAMAGALURU

IN COFFEE COUNTRY

■ RANEE SAHANEY

The cicadas' songs rise to a crescendo as twilight steals across the skies. The drizzle has eased off and only a tender breeze wafts through the massive banyan tree overlooking my lovely villa with its own private splash pool. I am at The Serai Chikkamagaluru resort, soaking in the slumbering silences and soothing green, calm and rested and ruminating over my many options for exploring Chikkamagaluru District. Home to endless coffee

plantations, this is where the aromatic beverage was first introduced to India by a saintly Sufi mystic from Yemen, known as Baba Budan, who migrated here in the 17th century.

Chikkamagaluru is an important hub for the planters who've been immersed in the business of coffee production. It, thus, also offers visitors the luxury of choosing their own ideal blend of coffee and chicory at any one of the numerous curing outlets where the raw coffee is dried, shelled, winnowed, graded and packed, ready to be marketed. It

makes for a great souvenir for folks and friends back home. This 'younger daughter's city' (which is what Chikkamagaluru means) was given as dowry by the local hotshot chieftain Rukmangada Raya of Sakrepatna. In his lordly fashion he bequeathed another parcel of land, nearby Hiremagalur — famous for its ancient Kodanda-Ramaswamy Temple — as part of dowry to his 'elder daughter'. The devout, as a matter of fact, find scenic Chikkamagaluru a nice little base for visits to the legendary Hoysala temple sites Halebid and Belur, a short haul of about 40 km away. It's also the perfect springboard for enjoying treks to various nearby peaks, waterfalls and the famous Bhadra Wildlife Sanctuary.

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

Mullaiyanagiri

Ever since friends and acquaintances in Bengaluru learnt I was headed out for Chikkamagaluru...the name Mullaiyanagiri seemed to resonate the strongest...stronger than the cups of coffee I was to down all the way to this beautiful coffee belt. Mullaiyanagiri (25 km from town), Karnataka's highest peak at 6,332 ft with its ancient, but newly renovated, **Mullapaswamy Temple** (raised to Lord Shiva), was wrapped in a gauzy veil of mist and drizzle when I swept into town. So to me all the hype of this sky-kissing wonder seemed to be a figment of the collective imagination. And the afternoon's drenching rain indicated that a tryst

with the legendary peak was not to be easy. However, plans were made for an early morning drive, followed by an eventful trek, to catch those spectacular views for which it was equally famed.

Never, but *never* make the mistake of thinking that the hike up to Mullaiyanagiri will be a cakewalk, particularly in the rainy months. In the warmer months, the hike up is relatively easy and the views spectacular. Camp here for the night (the temple priest might even arrange a quick meal for you) and you'll find the stars look close enough to touch. Chikkamagaluru below is a tangle of glittering tinsel laid out against the black velvet night. A day after Diwali, the Mullappaswamy Temple doors are thrown open for thousands of devotees trekking up for a darshan and the magic lamp-lighting ceremony. You need a 4WD to get

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→ FAST FACTS

When to go September to February are the most temperate months

Tourist office

● Office of the Assistant Director 📍
Department of Tourism
Vimal Niwas Bldg., Near Kote Circle,
Belur Road, Chikamagalur

Tel: 08262-228493

Cell: 09481311946 (DTC)

STD code 08262

ANURAG MALLICK



Dattatreya peeth shrine is located in the Baba Budangiri Hills

part of the way to the peak and the rest of the journey is to be done on foot. The narrow hilly trail (punctuated by the Seetala Mallikarjuna Temple — a Shiva shrine) can be slippery and scary if it's been raining. And the 350-odd steps (about 3 km from Seetalayanagiri) leading to the **Mulappaswamy Temple** at the top seem to disappear in the mist. With no parapet to protect you along the way it can be a daunting affair even for the most experienced trekker.

Baba Budanagiri Hills

The Baba Budanagiri Hills (earlier called Chandra Drona Parvatha) are 25 km from Chikkamagaluru town and also home to the cave shrine (Dattatreya Peeth) raised to the Sufi

mystic, Hazrat Dada Hayath Mir Khalander. Baba Budan, as the mystic came to be known in these parts, left Arabia in 1650 with seven coffee beans and settled in a cave in the Chandra Drona Parvatha along with a few companions. It was the Baba who first introduced coffee to the Indian soil. In the colonial days in the early 1800s, enterprising Britishers broke more ground by setting up vast expanses of coffee cultivation, which continue to be nurtured by Indian planter families to this day. Plump for a stay in one of the several homestays on offer by coffee planters. Try **Nature Nirvana Homestay** (see *Where to Stay and Eat on page 299*), which is in close proximity to the serene Sufi shrine.

Surrounded by great swathes of coffee plantations, the holy shrine of the Baba attracts devotees, both Muslim and Hindu. Hindu devotees believe that the Baba is an incarnation of Sri Dattatreya Swamy. Come here in the summer months when the 2-km track from the holy shrine to the **Manyakyadhara Waterfalls** is more accessible to visitors. Every 12 years the hills are a purple-hued mass under the weight of the blossoming **wild kurinji flowers**.

SHOPPING

Choose your own blend of coffee and chicory at any one of the F&G (Fresh and Ground) **Café Coffee Day** curing unit outlets dotting the marketplace, as well as **Panduranga Coffee Works**, one of the oldest and finest coffee roasters in the town (established 1938), on MG Road.

WHERE TO STAY AND EAT

There are two luxury hotels around town — **The Serai Hotel & Spa** (Cell: 09686445488; Tariff: ₹24,320-78,720; +breakfast and **The Gateway Hotel** (Tel: 08262-215000; Tariff: ₹9,500-10,500). Less expensive options are **The Planters' Court** (Tel: 235884-85; Tariff: ₹2,200-2,400; TE), and the **Nature Nirvana**

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→ GETTING THERE

Rail Chikkamagaluru Railway Station is connected to Bengaluru by Chikkamagaluru-Yesvantpur Fast passenger train. However, Birur Jn (46 km/ 1 hr) is a better option. Indica taxi to Chikkamagaluru: ₹8-10/km Good train options are the Janshatabdi Express from Bengaluru City and the Bengaluru Express from Birur

Road Most people prefer to drive down to Chikkamagaluru to explore the district at will. From Bengaluru, head for Hassan via Kunigal and Channarayana-patna. Where the main market ends at Hassan, turn right to catch the state highway to Chikkamagaluru. **Bus** KSRTC has a Volvo service (₹451-479) to and from Chikkamagaluru

kHomestay (Cell: 09844042152; Tariff: ₹3,500 + meals pp) in the Bynekhan and El Dorado coffee plantations which arranges treks and more. **Pakshikoota Homestay** (Cell: 09448618366; Tariff: ₹2,200 + meals pp) is close to town.

For more details, see *Accommodation Listings on pages 433-434* ■

#Awesomemkarnataka





Courtesy WIKIPEDIA

Hebbe Falls is a glorious sight in the monsoons

KEMMANNAGUNDI

A MONARCH'S RETREAT

■ ANURADHA KUMAR

The way to Kemmannagundi is planted with enough compelling road signs to waylay innocent tourists into some other, seemingly more tempting holiday. But if you stick firmly to your path, skirting the tangential charms of Halebid and Belur, the Chikkamagaluru coffee estates, and the distant road to Kudremukh, you'll reach a hill that was once preferred by a monarch. Kemmannagundi is actually a single, secluded hill that's been successfully posing as a hill station ever since

Krishna Rajendra Wodeyar IV made it his summer haven in 1932. It's compact charms — views, waterfalls, gardens, all in a day's work — make it one of the most fun-filled short holidays from hectic Bengaluru.

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

Views of sprawling coffee estates shaded with silver oaks stream past the car window. The Horticulture Department Guest House is thick with flowers that invite you to put your feet up and unwind.

The 4,705-foot-high Krishna Rajendra Hill manages to provide its

visitors almost everything a full-fledged hill station does. There's the **Rock Garden** within the guest house premises maintained by the Horticulture Department. The **Kallahati Falls** (10 km) drop from a height of 122m and are quite pretty. It's a lovely place for a picnic lunch. You could take a short trek to the **Hebbe Falls** (8 km), but don't attempt swimming here. And then there's **Z Point**, a good place from which to watch sunsets. Its very popular with trekkers.

◆ **Garden timings** 9.30 am-5 pm

WHERE TO STAY AND EAT

In Kemmannagundi proper, the hilltop **Horticulture Department Guest House** (Tel: 08261-237126; Bengaluru Reservations Director of Horticulture, Lalbagh Bengaluru Tel: 080-26579231; Tariff: ₹1,500-2,000; TE, dorm ₹2,000) is the only option. Most of the rooms here are ordinary and provide the barest facilities. But **Raj Bhawan** (Tel: 08261-237126; Tariff: ₹1,500-2,500), right on top, has fantastic views and adequately furnished large rooms. Located a few kilometres away from the town, **Ozone Valley** (Tel: 215078; Cell: 09448971207, 09448727717; Tariff: ₹2,000 + meals pp) is a beautiful hill resort amidst coffee plantations.

The food served at the Horticulture Department's Guest House in Kemmannagundi is not all that great. If you are with kids, bring along snacks because there are no shops nearby. Try dilpasand from any roadside stall. This is bread

filled with sweetmeats and coconut, so heavy it lands with a thud in your belly.

For details, see *Kemmannagundi Accommodation Listings* on pages 439-440 ■

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→ THE INFORMATION

When to go Just after the rains, from mid-September to February

Tourist office

● Office of the Assistant Director 📍
Department of Tourism
Vimal Niwas Bldg., Near Kote Circle,
Belur Road, Chikamagaluru
Tel: 08262-228493
Cell: 09481311946 (DTC)

📄 karnatakaturism.org,

STD code 08261

Getting There AIR: Nearest Airport: Mangaluru International Airport, Bajpe (150 km/ 5hrs) is well connected to major metros by Air India, Spice Jet and Indigo Taxi for Kemmannagundi cost around ₹10-15/km

RAIL: Nearest Railhead: Birur Jn (35 km/ 1 1/4 hr) is connected to major metros and cities. Taxis to Kemmannagundi as above

ROAD: From Bengaluru head for Kemmannagundi via Bhadravathi Main Road and Tarikere **Bus** From Bengaluru KSRTC services Chikkamagaluru (₹243-634) from where you can catch a private bus to Bhajabundangiri; jeeps/ taxis are available to Kemmannagundi



Photographs Courtesy WIKIPEDIA

A majestic tiger caught unawares in a clearing

BHADRA WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

TIGER COUNTRY

■ RANEE SAHANEY AND
SUNAAD RAGHURAM

The rain, sometimes a veil of gentle drizzle, sometimes an enthusiastic downpour, accompanies us all the way on the drive to the Bhadra River and its wildlife sanctuary set in the mountainous region of Malnad (Malenaadu) — Karnataka's tropical paradise. Swathes of darkling coffee plantations, backed by the mist-shirred, emerald mountaintops of the iconic Baba Budanagiri Range yield, reluctantly almost, to cultivated fields of potatoes, marigold, arecanut, sugarcane and

coconut palms. We stop to take snaps of the lofty 300-year-old teak tree, known as the Jagara Giant, whose girth is a whopping 5.21m, and one of the attractions of the sanctuary. Crocodile bark trees (yes they really have the look and feel of a croc's back!) dot the landscape along with exotic and expensive timbers such as rosewood, sandalwood and teak. Wild turmeric carpets the edge of the dirt track in parts. The trail is littered with storm-strewn branches as we bounce deeper into the forested terrain — the young helper in the jeep battles these and the hungry leeches without turning a hair.

Earlier known as the Jagar Valley Game Reserve, it now comprises 492 sq km and was reconstituted as the Bhadra Wildlife Sanctuary in 1974 by the Karnataka Government. It was brought under Project Tiger as the Bhadra Tiger Reserve in 1998. Located in Chikmagalur and Shimoga Districts in the verdant folds of the Western Ghats the Reserve offers plenty of opportunities to explore and enjoy this magical world — be it through trekking or by going on a jungle safari.

The Bhadra Wildlife Sanctuary is home to not just the tiger and elephant, but to the panther, bison, sloth bear, wild dog, flying squirrel (including the giant Indian squirrel) and wild boar. It also has over 120 species of flora, such as teak, rosewood, *mathi*, *honne*, *nandi*, *tadasalu* and *kindal*.

About 200 species of birds are found here, such as the singing *shama*, southern tree pie, Malabar whistling thrush, quaker babbler, yellow bulbul, black-winged kite, king vulture, great horned owl, great pied hornbill and black-naped blue flycatcher. Unfortunately, poaching of flora (some of the most exotic and prized timbers, such as rosewood and teak grow here) and fauna, especially in areas close to the plantations, is a growing problem here.

ORIENTATION

Bhadra Wildlife Sanctuary can be reached from **Chikkamagaluru** (23km away) via the small towns of **Joldal** and **Mallandur**, from where

you head to the **Honnala checkpost**, the sanctuary's main entry point. The other entry is the **Muthodi Gate**. There is a distance of 2km between the two and it is in this part that you will find the **Forest Range Office (Muthodi village)**. There is another route that offers amazing views of the Baba Budanagiri range and its lush environs. Down the **Tarikere Road**, just 6km away from Chikmagalur, is the **Kymara Junction**. Past coffee estates and up the Baba Budanagiri incline, you reach Kavikalgundi. Teak plantations, a legacy of the British, can be seen in **Jagara village**, which is located in the immediate vicinity of the wild-life sanctuary.

The mist-covered Chandra Drona mountains (also part of the Baba Budanagiri range) form a horseshoe-shaped boundary around Bhadra; it

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→ FAST FACTS

When to go From October–December and March–June

Wildlife/ Forest Dept offices

● Deputy Conservator of Forests
Bhadra Wildlife Division (Project Tiger)
Chikkamagaluru


Tel: 08262-234904

● Department of Tourism 

Govt of Karnataka

Email: info@karnatakaturism.org

 karnatakaturism.org

 karnatakaholidays.net

STD code 08262



An Indian bison grazes at the vegetation

has moist-dry deciduous forests and high bamboo groves. *Shola* forests are also found here.

Forest jeep safari Indians ₹450 per person (1.5 hrs); Foreigners ₹1200 per person **Timings** 6am–9am; 4pm–6pm.

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

There are plenty of opportunities to explore Bhadra's magical environs — be it through trekking or on a jungle safari. The chances of spotting ani-mals are quite high.

Nature Trail

There is a 3.5-km-long nature trail at Muthodi for those keen on

seeing the forest on foot. About 8km from the Range Office is the Nagarbhavi lake, where elephants congregate. There is a waterhole at Talbidrekere, where you can spot plenty of wild-life. Melgiri and Kesarhalla too offer excellent sightings. Tigers are some-times seen in Chandanahadlu, Doddahadlu and at a rocky escarpment near the Jenkalgiri caves.

Jungle Safari

Hire the forest department jeep unless you have your own transport. A guard will accompany you to make sure you find your way back. If you are in a big party of over 10, you can hire the forest mini-bus.

WHERE TO STAY AND EAT

The Bhadra Wildlife Sanctuary has two **forest rest houses**, which can be booked at the office of the Deputy Conservator of Forests in Chikmagalur. The **Muthodi Nature Camp** (Tel: 08262-234904; Tariff: ₹1,000, dorm ₹2,400), located in the forest, has two tents and two dorms (each with eight beds). The dorms can accommodate more people, but you will need your supply of pillows, bedsheets and blankets. For food, you could ask the caretaker to prepare meals. There are no fancy restaurants in Bhadra, so be prepared to rough it out. However, there are many hotels and restaurants in Chikmagalur and outside the sanctuary. The **JLR-run River Tern Lodge** (Tel: 08261-215425; Tariff: ₹14,800 + meals, 2 safaris) is one of the better options.

For more, see Bhadra WLS Accommodation Listings on page 432

AROUND BHADRA WLS

Sitalayyanagiri (18km)

The drive to Sitalayyanagiri is a treat. It offers excellent views of the Western Ghats, Chikmagalur, rolling valleys and coffee plantations. Ancient estate houses, with their moss-covered sloping roofs, green

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→ GETTING THERE

Air Nearest airport: Bajpe Airport, Mangaluru (160km/3-4hrs); Bengaluru International Airport (240km/3-4hrs); Taxi from Mangaluru to Chikmagalur costs ₹3,500; KSRTC bus fare is ₹160; from Bengaluru, KSRTC Volvo bus fare is ₹500

Rail Nearest railhead: Mysuru (160 km/ 3-4 hrs) is well connected to all major cities. Bus from Mysuru to Chikmagalur costs ₹160. Taxi fare is ₹3,500. Fare from Chikmagalur to Bhadra WLS (32kms) by a jeep or a taxi would be around ₹1,000-1500.

Road From Bengaluru via Hassan; then drive via Joldal and Mallandur to Chikmagalur, which is 32km away from Bhadra WLS. **Bus** From Mysuru (160km/3-4 hrs) KSRTC buses ply regularly on these routes. Fare: KSRTC/private buses ₹160; fare from Bengaluru (240km/3-4hrs) is ₹200-500

lawns and white picket fences, make for an enchanting pastoral scene. Further up the same road is the highest peak in Karnataka, **Mullaiyanagiri** (21km). At 6,300ft above sea level, it offers excellent views. ■

#Awesomekarnataka





Photographs Courtesy WIKIPEDIA

An evening view of the Tunga Bridge

THIRTHAHALLI

A LITTLE DISCOVERED GEM

■ RANEE SAHANEY

The lush monsoon mosaic of varying shades of emerald is truly a balm for eyes punished by the searing heat of a Northern summer. Greedily one soaks up the splendour of the Western Ghats as we bowl along the road from Bengaluru to Shimoga and off-beat Tirthalli ruminating by the roiling waters of the Tunga River set in a swathe of rich forestland. It was here at the Tunga River, that Parashurama is said to have arrived to wash off the last remnants of the blood on the axe by which he slew his mother Renuka Devi, on the directions of his father Sage Jamadagni. This act of ridding the sesame-seed sized stains of blood from the guilt-ridden Parashurama's axe has laid the ground for its veneration for

generations to come. This legendary spot is blessed Thirthahalli — or the 'Village of the Holy Water.' Legend has it that the waters of the Tunga can wash away your sins.

Its lovely surrounds and the several townships which lie in close proximity to Thirthahalli offer visitors excellent opportunities for exploring walking and trekking trails, pilgrim points, literary haunts, a bird sanctuary and even an elephant camp run by Karnataka's famous Jungle Lodges and Resorts.

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

Rameswara Temple

The little township is also linked to Lord Rama. The stone built Sri Rameswara Temple stands close to the spot (Parashurama Thirtha) where a great throng of devotees

celebrates the washing off the blood stains event as *Yellu Amavasye* Day. It is held on the new day of the Margshira month in the Hindu calendar. On the first day of the festival the idol of Lord Rameswara (the *utsav murti*) is carried to the Tunga and a ritual consecration (*abhishek*) is carried out at Parashurama Thirtha. Devotees then take a ritual bath in the river. On the second day the idol is pulled by the devout along Car Street in Thirthahalli in a showy pageant. On the third day of the festival the idol is placed on a raft (*teppa*) and taken downriver to Kuruvalli (this ritual is known as the *Teppotsava*) and then returned to its home in Thirthahalli. Fireworks and the illumination of the Tunga Bridge and Rama Mantap are also part of the festival highlights.

Tunga Bridge

This iconic link between Thirthahalli and its neighbouring Kuruvalli also goes by the name of Jayachamrajendra Wadiyar Bridge, as it was inaugurated by the famous Wadiyar royal of Mysuru, on its completion in 1943. A magnet for tourists the Tunga Bridge was built by renowned scholar-architect. Sir M Visvesvaraya. The elegantly arching structure is supported by a host of pillars on either side.

Anandgiri and Siddeshwara Gudda

Anandgiri Gudda falls on the road to Shimoga and Siddeshwara Gudda is situated alongside the Agumbe Road. Both these hills, a short walking distance from Thirthahalli,

are popular trekking hotspots. Splendid views can be enjoyed of the verdant terrain of the Western Ghats, famed for their great biodiversity.

WHERE TO STAY AND EAT

There's a mix of accommodation including hotels, homestays and guesthouses in and around Thirthahalli. For meals ask for popular local favourites such as *avalakki* which comprises beaten rice seasoned with lentils, spices, salt, *akki rotti* — a flatbread made from salted rice flour (good for breakfast) and not to mention the yummy *midigayi-uppinakai*, a spicy tender mango pickle.

Gabadi River Edge Resort (Tel: 08181-244100, 244200; Cell: 09449552633; Tairff: ₹2,000 + meals pp) is located in Gabadi, Tudur Post and offers 4 rooms, a library, trekking on prior request and a bonfire. The

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→ FAST FACTS

When to go October and March

Tourist office

● Office of the Assistant Director 

Department of Tourism

A-Block, 3rd Cross

Gopala Gowda Extension

Shivamoga

Tel: 08182-251444 (AD Office)

Cell: 09611515576 (DTC)

STD code 08181



Kuvempu's House In Kuppalli

Bananki Homestay (Cell: 09481490555, 09448320047; ₹2,250-2,500 +meals pp) at Devangi Post, Thirthahalli has 7 rooms and arranges plantation walks and cycling. **Devangi Atithya Homestay** (Tel: 274235, 274135 Cell: 09448766567, 09449430003 ₹2,500, +meals, pp) in the same area has 6 rooms, a swimming pool, games room, kids play area and arranges nature walks and trekking. The **Dodda Mane Homestay** (Cell: 09448603343; Tariff: On request) is located at Kasturi Akka, Main Road, Dodda Mane, Agumba and has 2 rooms, 1 5-bedded dorm and arranges meals and provides travel facilities.

AROUNDS

Chibbalagudde (10km)

Home to the Sri Siddhi Vinayaka Temple, raised to Lord Ganesh, pretty Chibbalagudde overlooks the

Tunga River where it turns on its head in U-turn as it wends its way north to Shimoga, 50km away. The river shares its great plenitude of fish with the locals. It's not surprising to find families heading out to a spot called Matsyadhama to feed the fish which are found here in great numbers in this holy river.

Kavaledurga (16km)

A huge draw for trekkers the 9th century Kavaledurga Fort, a seven tiered structure was developed by Keladi's Nayakas who once ruled over Shimoga and Vijayanagara. Ruins of buildings and remnants of old temples mark the different level of the fortress. Apart for this short tryst with the history of this area, the biggest reward when you huff and puff your way up to the top of the fort, is the panoramic views of the Western Ghats, the gleaming Varahi River and the Mani Dam.

Kuppalli (18km)

Just 18 km from Thirthahalli, Kuppalli revels in its importance as the birthplace of the great Kannada poet and playwright Kuvempu, as also of his son Poornachandra Tejaswi who rose to become an eminent writer, novelist, photographer, publisher, painter, naturalist, and environmentalist. Both father and son were cremated here. **Kavishaila**, a Stonehenge-style monument created from megalithic rocks also stands on this site as a memorial to the poet. Nearby, massive slabs of granite feature engraved poems and quotes by Kuvempu. His childhood home **mane** is now a museum.

Sakrebyle Elephant Camp (40km)

Situated in Sakrebyle, which is also readily approachable from Shimoga town (12 km), this camp offers visitors some of the most thrilling moments in the company of captive Asiatic elephants in an eco-friendly environment. Maintained by the Forest Department the elephant training camp, located by the Tunga River, is considered to be one of the finest in Karnataka. The interaction session allowed between the visitors and the elephants can last for up to 2 to 3 hours. The best time is early morning when the elephants are bathed in the water of the river by

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→ GETTING THERE

Air Nearest airport: Mangaluru (167kms/ 3 1/2 hrs).
Taxi ₹9-13 per km

Rail Nearest railhead: Shimoga (60kms). Many trains run from Mysuru and Bengaluru to Shimoga

Road From Bengaluru take NH-206 to Shimoga and NH-13 (Thirthahalli road) to reach Thirthahalli, which is about 54 km from Shimoga.

Bus Several buses ply from Bengaluru to Thirthahalli. Good options are KSRTC's Rajahansa Executive from Bengaluru (₹462) and Airavat Club Class (₹625)

the mahouts and then take to the feeding area. Elephant rides are subject to availability. Jungle Lodges operates a wonderful resort here and also offers some rewarding treks and birding tours. The tariff at the camp includes your stay, meals and activities. You can stay in a wooden cottage, a tented cottage or the moderately priced dorm.

See *Thirthahalli Accommodation Listing* on page 445 ■

#Awesomerkarnataka



HONNEMARDU

LINGANAMAKKI'S EMERALD ISLE

■ ALLEN MENDONCA

In 1965, Linganamakki dammed the Sharavathi River. When the dam's sluice gates were closed and the temporary walls erected between the hills blasted away, the waters from the Sharavathi roared into the gorge, consuming large tracts of evergreen forest. Once the waters settled, an enormous shimmering mirror of blue spread over several square kilometres.

Linganamakki Reservoir is better known as Honnemardu after the tiny hamlet that nestles above the hills overlooking the waters. And when the reservoir overflows, the run-off cascades down 960 ft as Jog Falls, India's highest and Asia's second highest waterfall.

Almost halfway across the reservoir, an emerald isle, which is visible from Honnemardu, nestles amidst the blue waters. Take a coracle from the mainland and glide across.

Even as your tent is pitched at dusk, you can hear the chirp of the cicadas, the wind whistle through the bamboo thickets and the soft swish of bats as they settle on trees laden with fruit. The silence is disturbed more rudely by the loud metallic calls of the racket-tailed drongo. But it's the nights that are the most magical. As a bonfire blazes and the sweet aroma of roasting potatoes wafts towards the tent, you can lie on your back and gaze at the stars with little else to do. There you are, on your very own island in a lake surrounded by verdant hills, miles away from the hurly-burly of the city.

The exuberant cascades of Jog Falls

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→ FAST FACTS

When to go All year round, except during the rains. However, Honnemardu is best post-monsoon

Tourist office

- Assistant Director of Tourism ■
Gopala Godwa Extension
A Block, Third Cross, Shimoga
Tel: 08182-251444
Cell: 09611515576 (DTC)
STD code 08183

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

Honnemardu is in the heart of the Malnad region, a land with a rich history, numerous Jain *basadis* (tiny temples), Hindu shrines and tribal villages. It's also a land that offers an enormous scope for true lovers of adventure and thrill.

A quiet night on the isle

Driving along the road hewn in the hills, you can glimpse through the trees the sheer drop and the silver flashes of the Sharavathi River far below. And then the road dips towards Honnemardu.

There, perched on a bluff, is the base camp of **The Adventurers**, a Bengaluru-based NGO (Honnemardu Campus Tel: 080-23305508, 23409712; Cell: 09448485508), in operation for more than 25 years, which organises camping and adventure activities on the lake and in the verdant hills around. Trained

instructors familiar with the surrounding forest areas guide you through these activities, which are popular with a wide range of Bengaluruans, from kids to the middle-aged. Safety measures include life jackets and instructors trained in rescue and first-aid programmes.

The experience begins when you're paddled to the isle from Honnemardu by guides in a coracle. Explore the small isle. You can explore some jungle trails, watch the sunset and enjoy the whole outdoor experience. Tents are pitched once you reach the isle. There's no electricity, but you won't need lights — there's the moon and

starlight. There are maybe a couple of snakes, they say, but no wild animals, and rest assured, the snakes wouldn't be able to enter the tent. A guide always stays with the group on the isle overnight and a professional instructor, trained for rescue and first-aid, mans the coracle to and from the isle. Settle down to the vegetarian dinner with a thermos of coffee and a container of water. Wrap up the night with a leisurely round of star-gazing.

Come the morning and the guide takes you back to the camp at Honnemardu. This is truly a wildlife and nature reserve for there are absolutely no tourist facilities of any

A yacht for you

A traditional coracle measures 8-10 ft in diameter, is made from bamboo and buffalo hide and coated with pitch. Rotund as they are, traditional coracles are nevertheless a stable proposition that take a lot of weight — including the occasional moped. The smooth and tiny rocks that create super-mini falls at every second metre along Karnataka's rivers are no match for the smoothness of the coracle's flat bottom — a beauty gliding across smooth waters. But the ones used by the guides in Honnemardu are made of fibreglass, with hidden air pockets on the sides to ensure they won't sink should water get in.

There was a time when one could purchase a coracle for around Rs 800-1,200 from the hamlets that dot the hills around Honnemardu and Jog Falls, and



PRASHANT PANJIAR

Coracle rides can be lots of fun

cruise up-river. Every other tourist hotspot in Karnataka with the tiniest body of water in sight offers coracle rides.

Fishermen too still use them, but it's not advisable for the less experienced to try their hand at rowing coracles because the currents are swift and the waters run deep. It takes considerable skill before you can learn how to spin a coracle on a virtual central axis.



SHUTTERSTOCK



Courtesy WIKIPEDIA

Yellow-browed Bulbul; an Orange-headed thrush

kind for miles around. They've arranged for a breakfast of fluffy white idlis and chutney, topped with steaming hot Coorg coffee. You're fortified for the action during the day!

Bio-degradable garbage can be left behind. Carry back all other trash. Only veg food, no liquor, no smoking. The isle can 'carry' a maximum of 60 people.

Adventure

There is a wide array of activities to choose from — camping on the island, trekking, canoeing, rafting, kayaking, wind surfing, swimming. All these activities are part of the deal. A morning in the great outdoors, a light lunch followed by a light snooze and you're again ready for

more activity, perhaps a walk along ancient trails. Try and identify the numerous trees that create a canopy of colour and shade.

Birds and butterflies

The forests around Honnemardu and Jog Falls are a birdwatcher's delight. A large number of species can be sighted while walking along the ridges of the valley — the European bee-eater, fairy blue bird, ruby-cheeked bulbul, orange-headed ground thrush, scarlet minivets. You'll also find blue rock pigeons sheltering on the rocks just amidst the waterfalls, swallows flying around, red-whiskered bulbuls and if you're lucky, the elusive yellow-browed bulbuls. Interestingly, there are a number of very beautiful



A sweeping view of the mountain side at sunset

butterflies: red helens, blue mormons, blue bottles, striped tigers, oak leaf, truly a feast for any butterfly lover.

TIP A copy of Salim Ali's *Book of Indian Birds* and binocs can be really handy if you're going birding.

usually recommended for most tourists is a fun weekend stay (in pitched tents) for 2 or more days.

For more details, see *Accommodation Listings on pages 437-438 (Honnemardu and Jog Falls)*

WHERE TO STAY AND EAT

There's only the camp run by **The Adventurers** (Bengaluru Cell 09448485508; Tariff: ₹4,000 + meals pp & activities for 2 days), open through the entire year. Price includes all meals (wholesome veg fare), stay in tents, use of equipment and helpful guidance from trained instructors. Though they offer various programmes, the one that is

AROUNDS

Gademane (10 km)

An easy drive from Honnemardu is this little village famous for its **Chitara art**. A noted organisation doing this remarkable work is Chittaradangala. Villagers here used charred rice powder and colours concocted from jungle fruit to paint walls and these days, canvases, with drawings that resemble cave paintings

of ancient times. The best part, you can also shop for a range of paintings made by the skilled painters here.

Tyavarekoppa (9 km from Shimoga)

A thrilling experience for kids is a **tiger and lion safari** with over 20 of the majestic beasts roaming around in two sprawling enclosures, at Tyavarekoppa. It's worth a visit either on the way to Jog or on the return journey by road. Tyavarekoppa is on the highway between Sagar and Shimoga. It's best to hire a taxi from Shimoga. Do remember to negotiate rates in advance.

Sagar (27 km)

Sagar, a cultural centre, is famous for its rural theatre exemplified by **Ninasam**, the theatre village founded by Magsaysay Award winner KV Subbanna. On any given day, watch movie classics from all over the world in the auditorium. Just 3 km away, lies Ikkeri, the old bastion of the Keladi rulers for 120 years. The big attraction here is the tranquil Aghoreshwar temple.

Nagavalli (75 km)

Located deep in the lush Govardhanagiri Forest Range lies the serene village of Nagavalli, from where one can go trekking to the

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→ GETTING THERE

Rail Nearest railhead: Talguppa (11 km/45 mins). From here, only jeeps can travel to Honnemardu. They cost approx ₹1,500 one way. Good train options are the Talguppa Express from Bengaluru City and Bengaluru Express from Talguppa

Road A comfortable drive on national highways. For the last stretch, it's good to have either a 4WD or a sturdy frame.

Bus KSRTC buses from Bengaluru go to Talguppa. From here, catch a jeep to Honnemardu (₹1500 return)

robust **Kaanur Kote**, a fort that was once the garrison and stronghold of the legendary Pepper Queen, Channabhairavadevi. For miles around, it's just dense undergrowth, with innumerable shades of green. A large number of bird species can be sighted. And though there's jungle overgrowth all around, one can spot deer and sometimes even boar. Though it is relatively safe, it is best to take the trek with a guide to avoid getting lost in the forest. The Adventurers (see *Where to Stay and Eat on page 314*) also arrange adventure treks here. ■

#Awesomekarnataka





JOG FALLS-LAKKAVALLI

A TERN FOR THE BETTER

■ RANEE SAHANEY AND
ALLEN MENDONCA

Jog is really four falls in one — Raja, Rani, Rocket and Roarer — which carefully coordinate their run to produce a truly aesthetic experience of delight.

Raja is the grandest, tumbling from atop the precipice. Halfway down is Roarer, which makes up for its comparative lack of height with

an even greater sound than Raja, as if heralding His Majesty's presence. Almost adjacent are Rocket and Rani, the former so named because he streams down like a rocket plummeting to the earth, and Rani for her grace.

Between July and October, Jog is a study in foam and spray, sparkling during the day and almost golden at night when it is lit up by sulphur vapour lamps. No wonder

Monsoon glory of Jog Falls

Karnataka's great poet Nissar Ahmed described Jog as a leitmotif of the rich cultural and historical heritage of the state in his evergreen song Jogada Siri.

Kannada filmmakers and actors including matinee idol Dr Rajkumar have picturised numerous romantic interludes against the backdrop of the falls, prancing about in the hamlet of Kargal close by, or at the bottom where a pool swirls and disappears into the rocks in the river's onward journey to the Arabian Sea.

When it rains, one can also witness the majesty of the Dabbe Falls in the Bhimeshwari Valley, about 30 km from Jog Falls. You need to drive down to Hosagadde, about 25 km away, trek down about 5 km and then start the steep descent to the falls.

The Lushington Falls are 35 km from Jog Falls. To reach here, drive down to Bilgi (10 km from Siddapur), from where you start the 3-km trek down-river before the final descent to the falls. You can also get to Jog Falls from Lakkavalli via Shimoga, Sagar and Talguppa.

River Tern Lodge

River Tern Lodge, set close to the small village of Lakkavalli, along the borders of Chikkamagaluru and

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→ FAST FACTS

When to go The camp is open all year round as it's quite pleasant unless you can't handle the humungous rain between June and September. If you are going fishing, the angling season is October to mid-April. Peak season for tern watching — March to June

Contact

Jungle Lodges & Resorts Ltd
49, GF, Khanija Bhavan
Race Course Road, Bengaluru
Tel: 080-40554055
Email: info@junglulodges.com
www.junglulodges.com

Shimoga districts, offers a most alluring wildlife holiday experience in Karnataka. This unique and popular lodge is named after the tens of thousands of Indian river terns (*Sterna aurantia*) that congregate on two tiny islands in the Bhadra backwaters during their annual breeding season from March through all the way to May.

Jungle Lodges & Resorts (JLR) has played a pivotal role in opening up some of Karnataka's least visited nature hubs and River Tern is a true gem in every sense. You have the nesting birdlife, the glorious backwaters and the promise of

exploring one of India's pristine wildlife sanctuaries. Plus, much of the trained staff is recruited from the local villages.

Tucked away, off the bend of the road, running alongside the backwaters, River Tern awaits visitors with traditional warmth and non-invasive hospitality.

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

Sprawling across twin hillocks conjoined by a pretty little wooden bridge, River Tern Lodge nestles by the backwaters of the Bhadra River, about 4 km from the little township of Lakkavalli, which serves the resort with basic necessities including the services of a doctor. Close to it is the BRP (Bhadra River Project) fish hatchery which is involved in the breeding of catla, rohu, mrigal, silver carp and grass carp in the emerald ponds set against lush verdure.

The resort is located behind the Bhadra Dam (about 500m away) erected in 1962. The northern border of Bhadra Tiger Reserve and Wildlife Sanctuary is conveniently close for a leisurely safari (*also see page 302*). Visitors can look forward to exciting outdoor activities such as mountain biking, guided short/ long treks, water sports, island camping, angling, rock climbing for children and star gazing, apart from birding and boat rides on the backwaters. And if you want to splurge a bit, go for the package that includes a visit to the Sakrebyle Elephant Camp by the Tunga River and the Tyavarekoppa lion/tiger safari.

SHUTTERSTOCK



Grey Heron looking for a tasty morsel

Boat rides and birding

Voile scarves of mists enfold the river at daybreak, lifting intermittently to reveal the steely ripple of the water under a morning breeze. With a break in the cloud cover, the river turns a pale robin's egg blue, the smear stretching to the far side. It's been raining most of the night and it seems I won't be able to approach the nesting islands. But as luck would have it, post-breakfast there's a knock on the door and a boatman dressed in camouflage fatigues tells me to follow him to the boat. I quell my natural fear of the river running high and my inability to swim, as the lure of the river terns surfaces strong and firm.

From March to May, two islands on the Bhadra backwaters (192 sq

km wide and spread over 492 sq km with plunging depths ranging between 136 ft and 186 ft) normally submerged under the onslaught of the annual monsoon, become temporary nurseries for tens of thousands of breeding river terns, as the waters recede. In the high season, the cacophony would put poor Cacophonix to shame as the birds squabble for perches on the tiny islands. The islands also act as nurseries to the pratincoles with their grey and black plumage.

The boat chugs along with a healthy purr and I'm exhilarated as the swish of the water slaps its flanks and throws up a spray that mingles with the light drizzle on my face. Deeper and deeper we go in

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→ GETTING THERE

Rail Convenient railhead: Birur Jn (44 km/11/2 hrs). Resort pick-up costs are ₹1,000-1,200. Or, catch a bus from Birur to Tarikere, which has private buses/ autos serving Lakkavalli village, 4 km from the lodge. Negotiate with an auto for the remaining ride. A good connection with Bengaluru is the Janshatabdi Express

Road The route is along the well-maintained NH48 from Bengaluru upto Tumkur from where you get onto the Shimoga Bypass (NH206) to Tarikere via Gubbi, Tiptur, Arsikere, Kadur and Birur. From Tarikere take a left (look for the board for Kuvempu University) and carry on for another 18 km or so, till you get to Lakkavalli town

Courtesy RIVER TERN LODGE



River Tern Lodge, where cottages have delicious views from the balconies

this watery territory. To my right, the dam looms grey and forbidding, its waters only released when the depths climb to the danger mark. On the left is one of the emerald green islands with birds wheeling high. I grab my camera and hit the right buttons, regardless of the grey skies and drizzle for I have spotted a clutch of terns sitting quietly on the downy grass close to the water's edge. Some have paid the penalty for their late sojourn...little fledglings, drowned in their grassy beds by the waters, sweep by us but the mothers remain stubborn, braving the rain, keeping the remaining eggs warm. Yes, it's way past the season but the laggards

impelled by some inner clock will not leave till their duty is done....

◆ **Boating timings** 7.30-8.30 am, 4pm-5pm The **peak nesting season** is March-June

Water sports

Despite the drizzle-rain-drizzle scenario, a host of corporates fresh from Bengaluru are cluttering the pathway to the water sports area operated by professionals at River Tern. In the summer it must be glorious but in the rains it's a completely different ball game. A short distance from the bank, the trampoline and a mighty see-saw on the river (complete with life jackets) continue to be a huge hit. And when

the weather's fine, there's a choice of kayaking, pedalling and rowing. They make sure that lifeguards are ready at all times.

◆ **Timings** 7.30-8.30 am, 10.30 am-noon **Charges** Rates vary for different activities (if you have opted for a 2N package, expect to pay extra for water sports)

WHERE TO STAY AND EAT

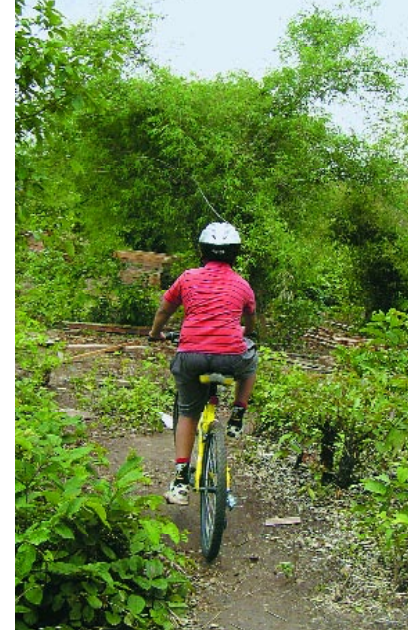
In Jog Falls

KSTDC's 16-room **Mayura Gersoppa Hotel** (Cell: 09480595732; Tel: 0818-6244732; Tariff: ₹2,358-4,500, dorm bed ₹300). **Sharavathi Adventure Camp** (Tel: 213399; Tariff: ₹4,000 per person (+ meals & some activities are organized).

In Lakkavalli

Scattered across the twin hillocks are the 24 twin-bedded cottages of **River Tern Lodge** (Cell: 09449599780; Tariff: ₹7,500) with all mod-cons and compelling river views from the balconies. The 1N/2D package includes accommodation, all meals, jeep safari, boat ride, birding, forest entry fee, camera fee and taxes. Water sports cost extra. The older cottages are located on the hilly peninsula, and the newer additions dot a small island, accessible by a wooden bridge. After an early dinner, warmed by

Courtesy RIVER TERN LODGE



Go biking at River Tern Lodge

some drinks, count the stars from your perch on the bridge. Book online or at the Jungle Lodges and Resorts office in Bengaluru.

Nutritious, homely fare is served buffet-style at the Salt Lick in the Gol Ghar, a gazebo set amidst the foliage overlooking the river.

For details, see Accommodation Listings on page 438 (Jog Falls) and (Lakkavalli) pages 440-441 ■

#Awesom Karnataka





SHUTTERSTOCK

Crocodiles are the kings (and queens) of Kali river in Dandeli

DANDELI WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

WILD WILD SOUTH

■ SUNAAD RAGHURAM

Reputedly the oldest game reserve in the country — an area of 204 sq km was declared a reserve in May 1956 — Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary is spread over an expanse of 450 sq km. It comprised a larger area that was unfortunately lost due to the pressures of human population explosion, mining and industrialisation. Hence, tourists should remember that while a visit to Dandeli is about experiencing the great wilderness, there is no guarantee that one will spot big animals. Elephant, gaur, sambar, and

chital all live here for sure, but not in as large numbers for them to be spotted unfailingly like in most other forests of south India.

Dandeli is also home to that most mysterious of the big cats in the tropics — the black panther. Official records say that eight of them exist here and there are people who have actually seen them. There are also arboreal creatures such as the flying squirrel, flying snake, flying lizard and different kinds of hornbills. Not to forget the slender loris, locally known as *van manav* (jungle man), which makes a sure-shot appearance soon after sunset.

ORIENTATION

Dandeli is the town closest to the Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary. To enter the sanctuary, you have to come via Haliyal to the **Range Office** at the **Kulgi Nature Camp** (run by the Forest Department), about 11km from Dandeli town on the Ambika Nagar-Yellapur route. It has a **Nature Interpretation Centre** with a museum. Entry tickets can also be bought here. Entry to the sanctuary is 3km from the Kulgi Nature Camp, which offers accommodation and adventure activities.

♦ **Entry and jeep safari charges** ₹450 pp **Safari timings** 6am-8am, 4pm-6pm **Photography** Still photos no fee, Video only if permitted.

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

The chief attractions of the sanctuary are crocodile-spotting in coracles on the river Kali, rafting, birdwatching and hiking.

Crocodile watching

Imagine going down a river in a coracle and being surrounded by over 150 crocodiles! That's exactly what happens if you go down the Kali river, just outside Dandeli town. It is said that the crocodiles congregate at this spot (called **Kerwad**) to eat the pulp waste released into the waters of the Kali by the West Coast Paper Mill, set up in the 1950s. Over the years, they have become habituated to eating the industrial waste. Talk about instant — and organic — recycling!

Birding

If you seek adventure, then hop onto a rubber dinghy and attempt to tame the furious rapids of the Kali. Or get into a coracle and sail along the river. Watch cormorants drying themselves on rocks, kingfishers fishing, and egrets waddling on the river bank.

Gowli villages

The *gowlis* are graziers who live around the Tavaragatti (24km) and

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→ FAST FACTS

Best time to visit All year round, except during the monsoons

Go there for Black panthers
Wildlife/ Forest Dept offices

Tourist Offices

● Director

Kali Tiger Reserve
Dandeli

Tel: 08284-231585

W kalitigerdandeli.com

● Dy Conservator of Forests (Territorial)
Haliyal

Tel: 08284-220128

STD code 08284

● Department of Tourism

Office of the Deputy Director 📍

NH-17, Near RTO Office

Goa Main Road

Karwar

Uttara Kannada

Tel: 08382-221172

Cell: 09483132206 (TO), 09742322901

STD code 08382



Rows of log houses in Kulgi Nature Camp

Kalbhavi (16km) areas. Their homes are unique and consist of bamboo walls smeared with a combination of mud and cow dung.

WHERE TO STAY

The **Kulgi Nature Camp** (Tel: 08284-231585, 291831; ₹1,200-1,500) is located 3km before the entry gate of the sanctuary on the Ambika Nagar-Yellapur route. It has 10 tents, eight cottages, and one dorm (15-bedded). Safaris and treks can be arranged. The Range Office is also located here. Bookings are made at the office of the Director, Dandeli-Anshi Tiger Reserve, in Dandeli town. The camp closes during the monsoons. The **Jaladarshini Forest Rest House** (Haliyal, Tel: 220128; Tariff: ₹800) in Dandeli has four rooms and a cook. Bookings are done at the Haliyal

Deputy Conservator of Forests (Territorial) Office. Near the Dandeli Bus Stand is the Jungle Lodges property, **Kali Wilderness Adventure Camp** (Tel: 230266; Tariff: ₹3,781-6,608, with meals). It has 14 rooms and 11 tented cottages and offers meals, coracle rides, river rafting, and safaris. **Bison River Resort** (Tel: 08383-256539; Tariff: ₹6,000, with meals) in Ilva has 33 cottages.

For more, see Dandeli WLS Accommodation Listings on pages 434-435

AROUNDS

Kavala Caves (25km)

In the middle of the Western Ghats tree canopy, are the ancient caves of Kavala. You'll have to make a pit stop at the **Phansoli Village Range Office** for your entry permit. For

more information, contact Kulgi Nature Camp (Tel: 08284-231585).

From the last point where vehicles are allowed, the caves are a 2-hour walk. Get ready to brave a climb of 540 steps on the way to the caves, from where, after a tour through narrow passages, you'll come across a rock formation that resembles a *Shivalinga*. The Forest Department offers a daily tour of these caves, from 6am to 12 noon (Tel: 08284-231585; Fee ₹600pp). Taxis charge ₹600 from Dandeli to Phansoli. For the journey from Phansoli to Kavala, hire a jeep (₹600pp by jeep).

Anshi National Park (54km)

Anshi was designated a National Park in 1987, and covers an area of 340 sq km. The **Anshi Village** lies within the park; here, you will find the Forest Range Office. About 3km away is the **Anshi Nature Camp**. You can hire jeeps at **Karwar** and **Dandeli** town. Anshi is home to deer, Indian bison Malabar civet, Malabar giant squirrel, pangolin, and sloth bear, as well as leopards, tigers, and elephants.

♦ **Entry fee** ₹400 (includes guide)
♦ **Timings** 6am-8.30am, 4pm-6pm

To stay at Anshi, you need permission from the office of the Deputy Conservator of Forests at Dandeli. You will need your own

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→ GETTING THERE

Air Nearest airport: Hubballi Airport (70km/1.5-2hrs) is well connected to the major cities by Indigo, Air India, Go Air, etc. Taxi from Hubballi airport to Dandeli costs ₹2,000; KSRTC bus fare ₹100

Rail Nearest railhead: Hubli (Hubballi) Junction Railway Station (78km/1.5-2hrs) is well connected to major cities. Bus from Hubballi station to Dandeli costs ₹100. Taxi fare is ₹2,000.

Road The most convenient way to reach Kali Tiger Reserve, Dandeli, is from Hubballi (70km).

vehicle to drive around Anshi as the Forest Department does not organise any safaris. The **Barpali View Point** offers fantastic views. This is the area where there are maximum sightings of the **black panther**.

Where to Stay and Eat

Reservations for the **Anshi Nature Camp** (Tel: 08284-231585; Tariff: ₹1,200 per tent, dorm bed ₹125) have to be done at the Director, Dandeli-Anshi Tiger Reserve.

♦ **Location** 60km from Hubballi
♦ **Air** Hubballi **Rail** Karwar ■

#Awesom Karnataka



Courtesy HULI VANA



Chilling out at lovely Huli Vana

HULI VANA

DEEP IN THE RAINFOREST

■ VAISHNA ROY

It has been a long and boring haul from Chennai, and the final 40 km of NH48 is one pothole after another, till you land in the last one and it's Sakleshpur. When I finally drag myself into the Gypsy and head for Huli Vana deep in the hills, it's well past seven in the evening and there's a full moon rising. As are my spirits. It's secretly quite a kick when you are in a place where nothing but a cliché will do. I roll my tongue satisfied around the words and say it aloud: "The hills are bathed in moonlight." Wave upon wave of the Sahyadris is awash in a silvery light that has transformed the scene into an intriguing and surreal moonscape.

When Huli Vana calls itself a jungle retreat, that's exactly what it is. It's not just a cute term for a luxury resort cuddled amid a tame patch of trees. After a last lonely temple, about 12 km short of our destination, even the rough roadway gives up and we are bouncing over rocks and fording streams. We reach a clearing in the middle of the rainforest, park next to a brook and I am shown to my log cabin by torchlight and moonbeam.

Huli Vana is off the power grid. Actually, it's pretty much off any grid and off the map as well. If Sunil, the owner, does not escort you there, it's unlikely you will find it. The one CFC bulb in my room is powered by a 2kW hydro turbine, fed by a brook that throws itself off some rocks

nearby. There's hot water for baths, the cooking is all on firewood and there are kerosene lanterns for the common areas.

In many ways, Huli Vana is not just a place to stay, it's an experience. It makes possible a certain way of escape that's getting increasingly difficult for the average person. And by being brave enough to eschew all frills and yet ensure a certain modicum of comfort, it stays true to its mandate in a way that I find very comforting. No Internet, no phone, no electricity, a cellphone that works only at a certain spot under a certain tree... It's an escape from the constant connectedness that is our twenty-first-century inheritance.

I trek, I read, I eat, I sleep, I pick burrs off my clothes. Two peaks, Jenkal Betta (Karnataka's second highest) and Digkal Betta, ask to be climbed. I turn down the former and accept the easier Digkal. Breathtaking, in more ways than one, the way up is a long haul and my lungs beg for mercy. The next day, we venture into the rainforest, literally bush-whacking through the dense undergrowth. Luckily, it's January and quite dry, so there's no sign of a leech anywhere. Lots of elephant and sambar markings but we don't sight anything. Actually, this is prime tiger and bear country (*huli* in Kannada means tiger), and the old guide has a hair-raising story (and scars) of his too-close encounter with a bear. And while we were trekking up Digkal, an elephant came calling right up to the kitchen, making the cook very nervous. We see the evidence next day — heaps of fresh dung, giant footprints, branches and trees torn off and strewn casually. We follow in its wake and I soon find myself struggling along the steepest and narrowest tracks that the huge creature has no business to have tackled so casually.

Huli Vana has only three 'rooms' to choose from—a log cabin and two large rooms with huge French windows. With a sitting room, fireplace and attached bathrooms, these are the 'luxury rooms'. My bathroom sits in a little hollow downhill and has a marvellous earthen stove with hot water constantly bubbling away. It also has spider families, wandering slugs, small frogs and something that eats my soap each night. Since none of these go hiss, I do not get hysterical.

On the last night, Sunil gets a bonfire going next to a beautiful vantage point—a wooden platform built on high ground with fantastic views. We sit around the hypnotic flames, roasting potatoes and sharing stories. A perfect ending, too.

For more, see *Huli Vana Accommodation Listings* on page 438 ■

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→ THE INFORMATION

Getting There Nearest airport: Mangaluru (164 km). Nearest railhead: Sakleshpur (33 km). From Sakleshpur, take the Hanbal-Devaldekere-Margunda route. From Margunda, Huli Vana organises a guide

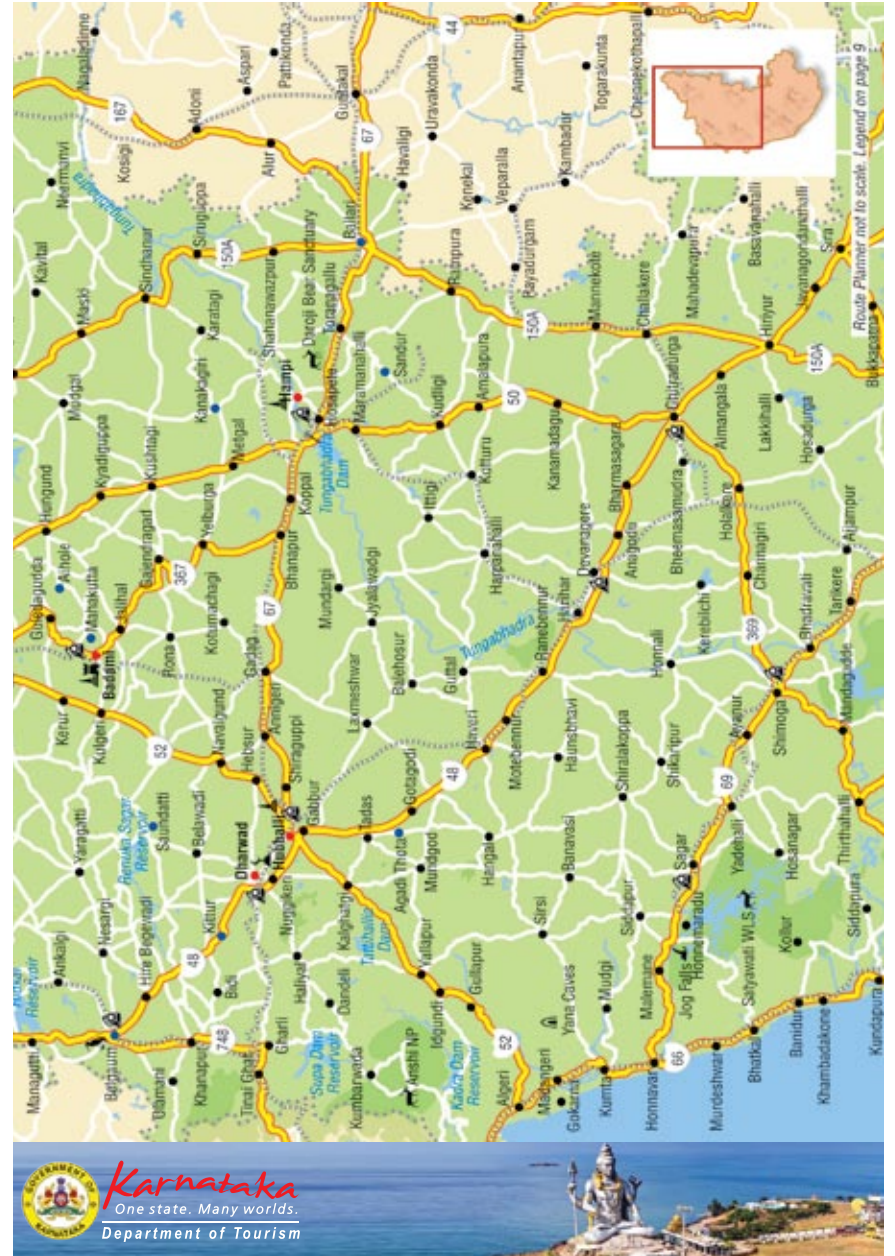
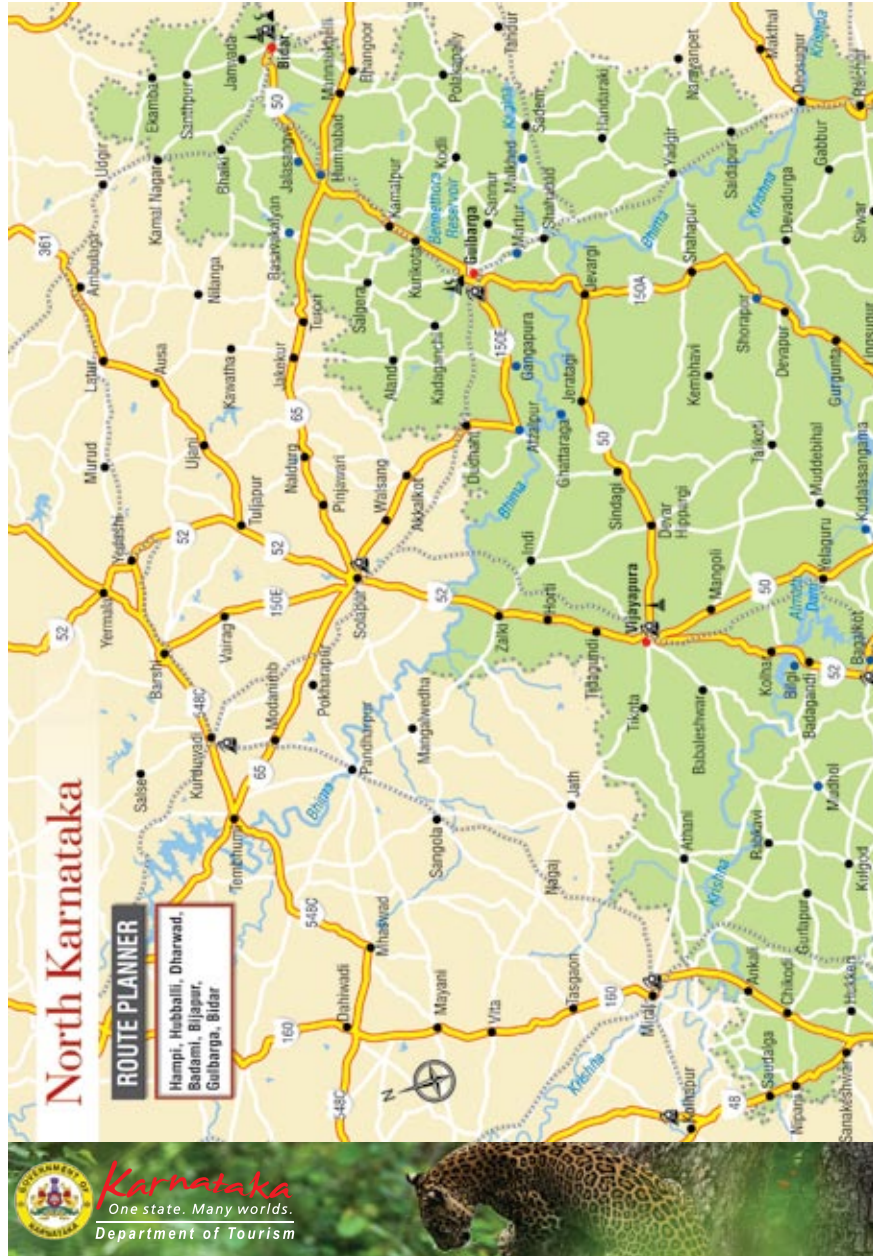
Accommodation 2 stone villas (sleeps 6-7 people each) with attached bathrooms, Dome tents (Oct-May), with meals and sleeping bags. Tariff ₹2,500 + meals pp (tents), ₹3,500 + meals pp (stone villa)
Contact 09108671755

W hulivana.com

North Karnataka

Ruminate over lost kingdoms and uncover
those secret histories amongst the ruined cities







PRASHANT PANJIAR

HAMPI

LEGACY IN STONE

■ ANURAG MALICK AND
PRIYA GANAPATHY

Nothing prepares one for the life-changing, mind-expanding experience of walking through the magical landscape of Hampi. Boulders of every conceivable shape and size lie perched in a strange balance, defying gravity and logic. Iridescent green fields of paddy, sugarcane, banana and coconut irrigated by the northeast flowing Tungabhadra, rebel against the starkness. And in between, lie the ruins of a once flourishing city with monuments and boulders that echo her fabulous tale. Just 13 km from the nearest

town Hospet in Ballari district, Hampi is a passage into time where one must peel off layers of history to find its true soul.

It has a Neolithic past of cave paintings and burial dolmens (locally called Mauryar Mane), a mythological timeline as the monkey kingdom of Kishkindha in the Ramayana and an empirical history as the capital of the Vijayanagara Empire, which stretched from coast to coast. While Vijayanagara's ruins span 64 miles, the main city was spread across 29 sq km along the southern bank of the Tungabhadra river. Situated in seven concentric circles, the capital was virtually impregnable with a

Sentinels of an ancient civilisation

natural barrier of the river and rocks on three sides. The city was in the form of a *srichakra* with the Virupaksha temple in the middle and nine gateways, the first in Hospet. Once larger than Rome with palaces grander than Lisbon, the bustling metropolis and its world famous bazaar drew traders, travellers and chroniclers, all of whom have recorded Hampi's glory extensively. Their travelogues reveal the global trade in spices, jewels, silks, cottons, diamonds and horses. Two centuries of prosperity spawned magnificent architecture, the ruins of which stand silent today.

They were witness to their wealthy king weighing himself in gold to be given to the poor as charity and their queen soaking in

tanks of scented oils. Amidst Hampi's ruins are exquisitely carved stone pillars which still resonate with the seven musical notes, stone chariots with wheels that turned, a prototype of a pinhole camera, the loftiest temple tower in Karnataka, the largest statue of Ganesha in the state and other feats of architectural genius that baffle the mind. In 1565, the confederacy of Muslim sultanates plundered the city and caused the empire's decline. The wooden superstructures have long been burnt with only stone remnants to piece together a mighty jigsaw puzzle that was torn asunder. The mind is forced to imagine the lost vision of Hampi and a golden era trapped in stone. For centuries the

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→ FAST FACTS

When to go The monsoon (July-September) and winter (November-February). Catch the 3-day Hampi Fest in November. In Jan-Feb check out the legendary Virupaksha Temple Car Festival and the annual Purandaradasa Aradhana Music Festival at Vitthala Temple

Tourist Office

● Office Of The Deputy Director
Department of Tourism
Near Lotus Mahal, Kamalapura, Hospet
Cell: 09880404150

W karnatakaturism.org

STD code 08394

site lay forgotten under rubble until excavations in late 19th century. In 1986, UNESCO declared the enchanting ruins of Hampi a World Heritage Site. Explore by hired bicycle, bike, car or on foot, take a boat across the Tungabhadra or drift down in a *theppa* (coracle), a mode of transport that has been around since Vijayanagara times. October to March is the best season; avoid summer months when temperatures can touch the high forties.

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

Hampi's extensive ruins can broadly be divided into two sections. The Sacred Centre stretched around the Virupaksha, Krishna, Achyutaraya and Vitthala temples, each with a market and township that developed around it. The Royal Enclosure is the

Achyutaraya Temple



Photographs by ANURAG MALLICK

palace complex with its structures, fortifications and monuments. North of the river from Virupaksha temple is Virupapura Gadde, full of budget lodges while Anegundi across Vitthala temple has monuments linked to the Kishkindha *kaand* (chapter) of Ramayana. With 56 key sights and 1500 state archaeological monuments, there's indeed a lot to see. Cycle rental ₹100 (off season) —200 (season) can be hired from Hampi Bazaar or your hotel.

To get to Hampi from Virupapura Gadda and Anegundi Villages, where most of the accommodation is, the ferry or coracle costs ₹30 /50 per head. Service is 7.30am-5.30pm
Auto (full day) ₹1,000

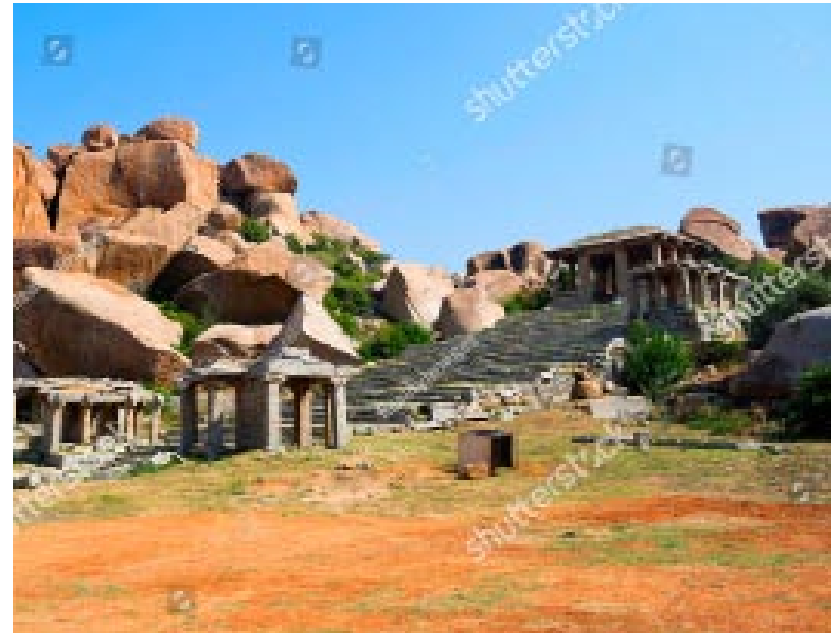
SACRED CENTRE

Virupaksha Temple

At 165 ft, the nine-storeyed tower of Virupaksha temple — the highest gopura in Karnataka — can be seen from afar. Dedicated to the paramount deity Lord Shiva and his consort Pampa Devi, the idols are set within an ornate *mantapa* with decorative paintings on the ceiling. The inner sanctum dates back to 8th century, though the main arch *Bishtapayya Gopuram* was built by Harihara and Bukka in 1442. Near the entrance is a three-faced Nandi that represents the past, present and future of Hampi.

In the 1565 sack of Hampi by the allied Muslim rulers of the Deccan, the face that represented the future was defaced and locals postulate that Hampi never regained its former

SHUTTERSTOCK



Hampi Bazaar, where fine fabrics and precious jewels were once traded

glory thereafter. On the far left is a Dining Hall built in 1510, still in use, and a colorful Kalyan Mantapa. The central courtyard has a Deep *Stambh* or pillar of lamps and a *Vijay Stambh*, erected to herald a victory. The 3-laned passage to the left dates back to 1440 and the queen, ministers and king walked through it to the main temple for *darshan*. Just adjacent is a 1510 temple bell whose peals could be heard 3km away. Without a guide, it is easy to miss the side passage with an early example of a pinhole camera — a small hole in the wall, dating back to 1442, shows the inverted image of the main *gopuram* projected on the opposite wall. Lakshmi, the delightful temple

elephant, blesses visitors with a loving thump on the head with her trunk, in exchange for a few bucks.

Hampi Bazaar

Nearly 35 yards wide and 800 yards long, the legendary Hampi Bazaar was known in memoirs as “a very beautiful street with very beautiful houses”. Stretching from Virupaksha Temple to the monolithic Nandi at the far end, this was the main business avenue. According to Portuguese traveller Domingo Paes, who visited during the reign of Krishnadeva Raya, “In this street live many merchants and there you will find all sorts of rubies, and diamonds, and pearls, and seed pearls and

clothes, and every other sort of thing there is on earth that you wish to buy". Today, it is a far cry from the world famous marketplace that it was. The shops have been relocated from the avenue to a small riverside patch adjacent to the temple called Janatha Plot, which bustles with souvenir shops, cafes, lodges, handicraft stores and hawkers.

Hemakuta Hill

Legend has it that Hemakuta hill was where Lord Shiva undertook penance before marrying Parvati and burnt Kama to cinders with his third eye. Shiva's personification as the presiding deity Virupaksha (*virupaksha* or the terrible-eyed one) gave the site its name Virupakshapura. The Pampa river is named after Parvati, and Shiva known as

Pampapati (Pampa's husband) hence the sacred area is hailed as Pampakshetra. The hill has the Prasanna or Mula Virupaksha Temple, Sree Gayathri Peeth Math and some Jain temples. Further on, Sunset Point offers a great view in the evening.

Kadale Kalu (Gram seed) Ganesha

Dating back to 1440, the 18ft monolith is the largest Ganesha statue in Karnataka. A 24-pillared temple was built around it later for protection. In 1565, during the sack of Hampi, Adil Shah of Vijayapura broke open the stomach and trunk of the idol believing that it held hidden jewels. The resulting split stomach resembled two halves of a gram seed, lending the sculpture its popular name *Kadale Kalu* (gram seed) Ganesha!

This impressive monolith was built around 1440



PRASHANT PANJIAR

Photographs: SHUTTERSTOCK



Its a toy story

Kinhal kale

Kinhal kale, the tradition of painted wooden toys of North Karnataka does not enjoy the same fame as the Channapatna toys of the south, yet it represents a rich artistic heritage dating back to the 16th century. The woodcraft is believed to be as old as the Vijayanagara Empire and thrived under royal patronage. Kinhal *chitragaras* are regarded as descendants of the artists who painted the murals in the Virupaksha or Pampapati temple at Hampi. After the fall of the Vijayanagara Empire, the artists dispersed to Kinhal, a small village near Koppal, Kanakagiri, Harapanahalli, and Kampili, besides Ananthpur in Andhra Pradesh. The craft received support from the Nawab of Koppal, Desais of Kinhal, and Nawab Salar Jung of Hyderabad who also patronised the lacquered Nirmal woodcraft of Adilabad district. This resulted in a blend of Indo-Saracenic art that is now a characteristic of Kinhal craft. The process

of crafting Kinhal toys is complex. The design is drawn on a piece of light *polki*, hale or *hirelevu* wood and the artist carves out a rough form. Tamarind seed powder, wood dust, pebble powder and gunpowder is mixed with water and left to boil resulting in a fine paste called *kitta*. Strips of jute are pasted on the figure, sandpapered and polished with a stone. Ornamentation or jewellery is embossed on the figure using pebble powder paste and liquid gum. Colours are applied using a procedure called *lajjawar*. In Kinhal, the art is on the wane. But around 100 *chitragaras* still make murals and wall hangings recreating patterns from Virupaksha's murals or scenes from the epics. They also make idols for temples and festivals – Kinhala Gauri, Ganesha, Shiva-Parvati astride Nandi for Gowri Hunnime/Habba, Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati. Folk toys like *Kiskalgombe*, Benne Krishna (Krishna with butter ball) and *Uyyale* Gowri (Gowri on a swing) are still sold at village fairs.

Sasive Kalu

Nearby, the *Sasive Kalu* (Mustard seed) Ganesha got its name from the perfectly rounded toes of the idol, akin to mustard seeds! Built in 1516, the richly carved 9 ft Ganesha is

largely intact except for the lower left hand and trunk. Behind the image is the outline of a female figure — symbolic of Parvati, the eternal protector of Ganesha, who was always behind him.

Krishna Temple

The Bala Krishna Temple was built by Krishnadeva Raya in 1513 to commemorate his victorious conquest over Prataprudra Gajapati of Odisha.

Ugra Narasimha

Ugra Narasimha is one of Lord Vishnu's nine *avataars* taking on the fierce form of Lakshmi Narasimha, part man (*nara*), part lion (*simha*). The 6.7m high statue was carved out a single block of granite in 1528 during the reign of Krishnadeva Raya. The figure is seated on Adishesha, the seven-headed snake depicted in hoods fanning above the image. The structure used to have four arms originally, which were amputated in the Muslim invasion of 1565. The image of Lakshmi also suffered the same fate.

Badavi Linga

To the right of the Narasimha sculpture is the Badavi Linga temple. The 3m high monolithic lingam has its base perpetually in 1m of water, fed by an arm of the Tungabhadra. This temple celebrates Shiva's manifestation as Jalakantheshwara. Built in 1467 during the Sadashiva Raya period, the temple is named after Badavi, an old woman who worshipped the linga.

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→ GETTING THERE

Air Nearest airport: Jindal Vidyanagar Airport (35km/ 1hr) is connected to Bengaluru and Hubballi by Trujet. Taxi ₹9-20 per km, However Hubballi Airport (162km/ 4.5hr) is well connected to Bengaluru, Mumbai, Hyderabad and Tirupati

Rail Nearest railhead: Hospet (13km/1/2hr) is well connected to Bengaluru, Vijayapur, Hubballi, Guntakal and also to major cities like Goa, Howrah, Pune, Kolhapur, Bhubaneswar, Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Visakhapatnam, etc. Sight seeing taxi to Hampi costs ₹2,800 (return). Auto will charge ₹200-300 to Hampi. ST buses are also available

Road Take NH48 from Bengaluru till Tumkur and on Chitradurga. Stay below the flyover intersection to catch the right turn onto NH13 for Hospet via Hosahalli. NH48 is a good run till Chitradurga, but NH13 offers a bumpy ride. Travel during the day to avoid heavy night traffic. **Bus** The KSRTC super deluxe night bus leaves daily from Bengaluru, which is also connected by deluxe and ST buses, KSRTC bus fare is ₹650-782



Ugra Narasimha, a fierce manifestation of Lord Vishnu

Vishnu Temple

The Vishnu temple was consecrated to famous Vaishnava saint Tirumangai Alvar and was built by Sadashiva Raya in 1556. Behind it is a 2-storeyed gate called Harishankar Mahadwara.

Achyuta Raya Temple

Built between 1530-40 in the reign of Achyuta Raya, its main deity is Tiruvengalanath or Lord Venkateshwara. It is the only temple complex to have two enclosures within the main temple. North of the temple are the atmospheric ruins of a long street of short pillared *mandapas*, formerly called *Achyutapet*, but more popular as *Sooley Bazaar* or Courtesan's Street.

Matanga Hill

Named after Sage Matanga who had his ashram here, Matanga Parvatam (hill) was where Sugreeva and Hanuman sought refuge from the wrath of Vali, who couldn't set foot here because of the sage's curse. Hanuman became Sugreeva's minister and spotted the itinerant princes Rama and Lakshmana from Ayodhya and arranged a meeting. Apart from a good view after a steep climb, there is a temple dedicated to Virabhadra here.

Kodandarama Temple

Dedicated to Kodandarama or 'Rama with a bow', the temple is situated opposite Chakratirtha, the most

sacred bathing ghat on the Tungabhadra. The sanctum sanctorum has 15 ft tall figures of Rama, Sita and Lakshmana carved on a natural boulder. It is believed that after defeating Vali, Rama crowned Sugreeva as the monkey king at this spot.

Vitthala Temple

Dedicated to Lord Vishnu's form Vitthala, the temple in local lore was deemed so opulent that even Lord Vishnu found it too grand and returned to his humble home! Construction began in 1513 under the reign of Krishnadeva Raya and continued by Achyuta Deva and Sadasiva Raya. It suffered destruction in the Muslim invasion of 1565. The main structures in the temple

The view from Koti Linga is serene



complex are the *Sabha Mandap*, a 100-pillared meeting hall and the *Kalyan Mandap* or marriage hall for the royal family. The *Natya Mandap* or Dancing Hall is also known as the *Saptasvara Mandap* famed for its musical pillars. When tapped, the pillars emit the sound of 56 musical instruments including — *jaltarang*, *veena*, *tabla*, *pancha tala* and *damru*. The *Sapta-svara Khamb* with its 16 pillars resonates with the seven *surs* (notes). **The Stone Chariot** facing the temple is in itself a miniature shrine with an image of Garuda, resembling a temple chariot or *ratha* in which temple idols are taken out in procession. Built in 1516 from a monolithic boulder, only the wheels of the chariot were added externally. In the past, the wheels could actually move in the past but were cemented later. The chariot was originally drawn by horses, which were damaged in 1565 and were ultimately replaced by elephants.

King's Balance (Tulabhara)

Southwest of the Vitthala Temple, the King's Balance is a giant pair of scales, where the kings of Vijaynagara weighed themselves in gold on festive occasions like Coronation Day (*Tulapurusha Dana*), New Year and eclipses. Gold or its equivalent was distributed to the Brahmans and the needy. The structure consists of two 15 ft granite pillars with a stone beam, the underside of which displays three hoops. Carved into the stone floor are images of a great number of people prostrating in front of the king.



Visitors through the Vitthala Temple

Purandaradasa Mandapa

Adjoining the Vijaya Vittala temple is a 60-pillared *mandapa* or pavilion consecrated to Purandara Dasa, a holy saint of the Haridasa movement who is hailed as the pitamaha (grandfather) of Carnatic music. This is where he is said to have composed and sung in praise of Vitthala or Lord Vishnu. Used on religious occasions for *anushtana* (austerities) and on Jan 14 for *aradhana* (worship), the mandapa with a white-washed top has traditionally been used by sages to meditate. Today, people wash clothes on its stone slabs.

Sugreeva's Cave

The cavern where Sugreeva hid Sita's jewels for safety is known as Sugreeva's Cave and can be found

right at the southern edge of the Tungabhadra river bank. Nearby, lies a sheet rock with streaks that are explained as marks made by Sita's garments as she was passing by. When Sugreeva showed Rama the jewels, which the latter recognised as Sita's, it was decided that Lord Rama would kill Vali and Sugreeva, along with his army of monkeys, would in return help Rama find Sita.

Kotilinga

Carved on a massive boulder located near the Tungabhadra river is a large square *mandala* which features a host of stone lingas known as *Koti linga* (koti — meaning a crore). Near it is a beautiful and intricate carving of Padmanabhaswamy or Lord Vishnu resting on Anantha.

Royal Enclosure

The sprawling Royal Enclosure or Palace Area is a miniature city within Hampi that housed palaces, pavilions, temples, audience halls, royal baths and stables.

King's Palace

Only the base of the King's Palace remains in what was once the largest enclosure in Hampi with an underground chamber that served as a treasury and private hall. The Underground Chamber and Public Bath are in a state of disrepair; as is the hundred-pillared Audience Hall described by Abdur Razzaq as the loftiest building in the citadel. Outside the enclosure are two stone

Lotus Mahal



SHUTTERSTOCK

doors that served as the palace gates. Originally found in 13 pieces, they were joined together and are now on public display.

Mahanavmi Dibba

Erected in 1513 to commemorate Krishnadeva Raya's victorious campaign over Prataprudra Gajapati of Odisha, it is also known as House of Victory. Later, it was used by the king to view public festivities during the 9-day Navratri festival which led to it being referred to as the Dasara Platform or Mahanavmi Dibba. The existing structure is a three-tiered base, the lowest being 40 sq m and the top-most 24 sq m. Its walls depict scenes from everyday life during Vijayanagara times.

Pushkarni

This stepped tank with a depth of 7 m and an area of 22 sq m was excavated as recently as 1986 and is in excellent condition since it was well preserved underground. Made of schist, the tank was used by royals and for religious purposes. The symmetric design of the five tiers is breathtaking beyond belief.

Zenana Enclosure

North of the King's Palace is the **Zenana** or Ladies Quarters, which housed the Queen's Palace, water pavilions and quarters for attendants. Since it housed women, it had three watchtowers manned by guards and a high wall with four sham entrances and no prominent gateway. Nothing remains of the ornate Queen's Palace except the basement. The Shikhandi

PRASHANT PANJIAR



The Elephant Stables can be recognized by their striking Indo-Islamic architecture

watchtower to the left of this vast tier used to be guarded by eunuchs.

Lotus Mahal

A two-storeyed structure that resembles lotus petals when seen from above, the Chitragni Mahal is better known as Lotus Mahal. Built for Tirumala Devi, the favourite queen of Krishnadeva Raya, it is a beautiful hybrid of Islamic, Hindu and Jain styles of architecture. The plain narrow block of stairs suggests that it was an afterthought; perhaps the architect forgot to add a staircase in the original plan!

Elephant Stables

Drum-shaped octagonal domes capping the eleven massive rooms,

the famous Elephant Stables is an Indo-Islamic structure. More or less intact, only the central room has lost its superstructure. Persian ambassador Abdur Razzaq noted in his unique memoirs that the royal elephants used to be tied by chains to an iron hook embedded in the ceiling of each room.

Hazara Rama Temple

According to popular belief, the temple gets its name from the numerous bas-reliefs depicting scenes from the Ramayana, hence Hazara Rama or the Temple of a thousand Ramas. But the name is actually derived from Hajana Rama, meaning 'palace temple' in the Telugu language. Situated at the entrance of

the royal palace enclosure, this was a private temple for the royal family. Dedicated to Lord Rama, the inner sanctum was erected in 1422 while the external structure came up in 1666. Shilpi (sculptor) Mudannachari Somannachari is credited as the architect of this unique temple, the only such in Hampi with rich carvings on the external walls. Nearby are the splendid ruins of the *taksal* or mint.

Dandanayak Watchtower

Standing where the third wall of Vijayanagar used to be, the 'Danaik' or Dandanayak Watchtower, is named after the army commander. The area around it used to be Hazari Rampur and guards kept a close watch over any possible intruders. While there were many such towers, this is the most significant one that

Malyavanta Hill, to Raghunath Temple



is more or less intact, showing Muslim influence in its elegant domes and arches.

Queen's Bath

Further en route to Kamalapura, lies the Queen's Bath. Built for Krishnadeva Raya's chief queen Tirumala Devi, the 8ft deep pool encompassed by a plain square exterior has decorated corridors and beautiful arched windows and balconies inside.

Past the erstwhile market of Vijayvithalapura, are the ghostly remains of the **Heera-moti bazaar**, once a roaring 16th century market of precious stones. To the left is **Panduranga Tank** and further ahead, a structure called **Vasanta Utsav Mandap**. A Kalyana Mandapa built in 1512, it served as a marriage hall for soldiers. **Bhima's Gate** is a gateway dedicated to the Pandava hero Bhima, the side-walls depict scenes from the Mahabharata such as Bhima slaying Kichaka and Draupadi tying up her hair. Situated on the road to Kampili, is the **Ganigitti Temple** or commonly, the 'Oil Woman's' Temple. It was actually a Jain shrine, built in 1385 by Iruga, a minister of Bukka II during the reign of Harihara II.

OTHER MONUMENTS

Sister Stones

The oddly named *Akka-Tangi Gundu* or Sister Stones refer to two massive boulders that lean against each other. According to local lore, around 1510, two sisters Yellamma and Bullamma,

PRASHANT PANJIAR



The Hazara Rama Temple in Hampi depicts scenes from the Ramayana

exhausted after their tour of Hampi on foot, cursed the hot rocky citadel and called it names. When the sisters leaned against each other tiredly, a local sage turned them into stone! In 1992, the tremors of the Latur earthquake were felt as far down as Hampi, causing the boulder on the right to crack into two; both halves now sit unperturbed.

Underground Virupaksha Temple

One of the oldest temples in Hampi, the Underground Temple is dedicated to Prasanna Virupaksha and was built during Sangam rule in the 14th century and improved in 1517 by Krishnadeva Raya. This temple was discovered during excavations in 1923 in a state of utter disrepair. The temple sanctum is perennially underwater, making it a water-cooled

temple blessed with natural air-conditioning.

Malyavanta Raghunath Temple

Also accessible by vehicle, this temple atop Malyavanta Hill is a sacred site. The cave shrine has a large bas relief of Lord Rama, Lakshmana, Sita and Hanuman. It was atop Malyavanta Hill that Lord Rama and Lakshmana supposedly waited for four months to tide over the monsoons before they marched to Lanka with the *vanara sena* (monkey army) to retrieve Sita. An *akhanda Ramayana patha* goes on continuously here.

Hampi Archaeological Museum, Kamalapura

Started in 1972 and maintained by the Archaeological Survey of India, the small but useful Archaeological

Museum on Daroji-Kamalapura Road displays sculptures and artefacts unearthed from excavations at Hampi. The scale model of Hampi exhibited here gives a bird's eye view and full scale of the ruins. The ASI Kamalapuram publishes a booklet on Hampi, which includes a map that is available here, if in stock.

Entry ₹5 Timings: 9am-5pm

NORTH OF THE RIVER

Anegundi

During the reign of the Vijayanagar kings, the royal elephants were brought from their stables in Hampi to be stationed closer to the river, for a proper bath. Over time, this pachyderm halt came to be known as *ane-gundi* (elephant hole) by the

Chintamani, where Rama killed Vali



local community a name which is carved in stone today.

Gagan Mahal, the 16th century royal palace, houses a government office and an ancient Durga temple. Also worth a look are the old north and south gateways, **Ranganatha Temple**, a Jain temple with solid pillars and **Huchchappayana Matha Temple**, a dilapidated structure near the river with black stone lathe-turned pillars and fine panels of graceful dancers.

Anegundi has beautiful vernacular architecture, best enjoyed on a walk through its streets lined with houses sporting ornate windows, doorframes and pillars. Located on an island and reachable by coracle or boat is the sacred complex of **Nava Brindavana**. It houses the mortal remains of nine Madhva saints, prominently Madhvacharya's disciple Padmanabha Tirtha and Mantralaya Sri Raghavendra Swamy's guru Sudheendra Tirtha. One must observe silence and avoid crossing the yellow demarcation lines as the seers are said to be in *samadhi*.

Stay in heritage lodgings like Uramma Heritage Home (named after the village goddess) and Peshegar House, run by The Kishkindha Trust, who also have a Shorba café and craft store selling popular banana fibre products.

(Tel: 08533 267793, 267662

www.thekishkindatrust.org)

Chintamani

Chintamani is the riverside spot from where Lord Rama shot his arrow to kill Vali during his hand-to-



Anegundi Gagan Mahal, which houses an ancient Durga temple

hand combat with his brother Sugreeva. The exact spot is marked on a boulder near the riverbank, which bears the imprint of a weapon, which Lord Rama had placed to be used against Vali. The site where Vali fell is indicated by a *stambh* (pillar) on the other side of the Tungabhadra. A big mound of ash in present-day Nimbapuram village alludes to the cremated remains of Vali.

Pampa Sarovar

This unassuming lotus-filled tank is regarded as one of the four holy sarovars created on earth by Brahma before the descent of River Ganga. The backdrop of Pampa Sarovar is a wall of rocks that holds the rocky citadel of Vali Killa and Durga Temple. Legend has it that the army of monkeys built the bridge to Lanka

using these very rocks. Whatever they could not take with them remained, as one finds them now in Hampi. A porous rock, in the custody of spiritual caretaker Baba Ram Das, is claimed to be a piece of bone belonging to Vali.

Shabri Gupha

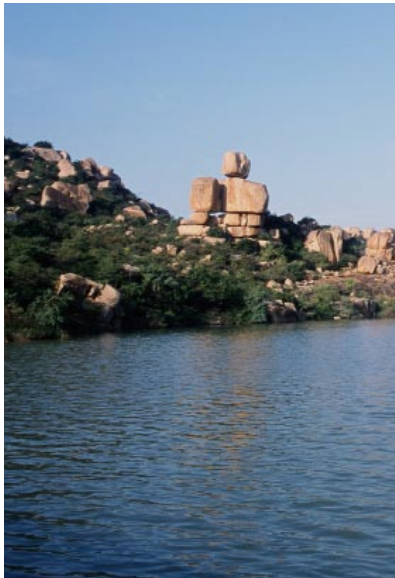
The Ramayana mentions a pious old lady called Shabri, a disciple of Sage Matanga who tasted *ber* (wild berries) before offering the choicest ones to Lord Rama. Owing to her low caste, Shabri had been chased away by local seers sometime earlier and took up lodging in a humble cave near Pampa Sarovar. Almost immediately, the water turned muddy. On Rama's arrival, the people complained to him about it. To his surprise, instead of purifying the pond, even his

divine touch made it dirtier. Sensing the reason to be the injustice meted to Shabri, he asked her to take a dip in Pampa Sarovar. By restoring her honour, the water became fresh again, as it remains to this day. The white washed cave has Lord Rama's *charana paduka* (foot imprints) and a sooty dhuni (sacrificial fire). Naturally air-cooled, the cave once led to an underground path 4.5 km from Pampa Sarovar to Pampapur (Hampi), opening out near the Virupaksha Temple under the Tungabhadra, which has long been closed.

Lakshmi Temple

Vidyaranya Swami, the seer from Sringeri Math undertook a penance at this spot for 24 years, meditating on the dwindling Hindu might.

Sanapur Lake is a scenic locale



When no visions came to him, he thought of quitting in disgust. But that very night, Goddess Lakshmi appeared in his sleep and asked him to make a wish. The sage mockingly asked for a rain of gold for an hour and 15 minutes. Lo and behold, the next day it rained gold. A temple was built for the goddess of wealth in 1336 with an idol cast out of pure gold. Roping in Harihara-Bukka, Vidyaranya Swami laid the foundation of the Vijayanagara Empire and urged the brothers to move the capital south of the Tungabhadra. A rare figure of Vidyaranya Swami can be seen in a small niche in a subsidiary chamber.

Anjanadri

The jagged white streak on the Anjanadri Hill seen from a distance marks the 550 whitewashed steps up to a famous hilltop temple and the rewarding view it presents. About halfway up, **Anjani Gupha**, a cave dedicated to Hanuman's mother Anjana can be seen. The cave has an underground network that has been blocked. A further ascent leads to the **Hanuman Temple** on the summit, the birthplace of the Monkey God, which till date is guarded by monkeys. Watch out for food items; the monkeys can be quite aggressive. The hike is best done early morning with alluring views of the sunrise over the boulders, river and fields.

Old Stone Bridge

Also known as Halle Kallena Setvi (Old Stone Bridge) in Kannada, or popularly, Hanuman Bridge, it was



Anjanadri Hanuman Temple, believed to be the birthplace of the monkey god

built by Kampabhupa, the brother of Emperor Harihara II in 14th century and connected present-day Ballari district to Raichur across the Tungabhadra river.

Sanapur Lake

A natural lake expanded into an irrigation reservoir, Sanapur Lake is a scenic locale surrounded by rocky hills and boulders. The road is lined with paddy and banana fields and wends past boulders to reach the lake. Warning signs discourage visitors from swimming in the lake, which has slippery boulders and crocodiles! A few boatmen ply coracles for tourists.

Entry fee Vittala Temple & Palace Area Indians ₹40; Foreigners ₹750-800 (Same day ticket for both)

Camera ₹50 **Timings** 10am-6pm; **Open** All days **Sightseeing Tour KSRTC bus tour** (Full day): ₹425 pp **Timings** 9am-5.30pm

TIP The tour ticket does not cover entry fee

Bouldering The main climbing hangout is Goan Corner. **Kishkinda Trust** (Cell: 09449284496) offers equipment and instructions.

TIP Distances between monuments are considerable, so hiring a cycle is recommended. The ruins are secluded after sunset so avoid moving around alone especially with valuables.

SHOPPING

Hampi Bazaar has a colourful assortment of bric-a-brac and a host

of hippy-tinged clothing and accessories. Bargain for junk jewellery, tie-n-dye scarves, kurtas and wraparound skirts, mirrorwork *jholas* and bags etc. In Anegundi, The Kishkindha Trust's **Shorba Workshop** has skilled local artisans' woven products from shorba or banana fibre — mats, bags, chappals, clothes and other knick-knacks. **Evolve Back Kamalapura Palace** Hampi has a good boutique as well. **Hotel Malligi** in Hospet has a good in-house boutique and well-stocked bookstore. Traditional Kinhal craft like toys, wood carvings, table tops, cradles, cots, chairs and other collectibles are available at the nearby village of Kinhal, 30 km from Hospet. At **Kala Kushala Kendra** in Sandur, Lambanis and local villagers make handicrafts, bamboo art and Lambani dresses.

Ornaments at Hampi Bazaar

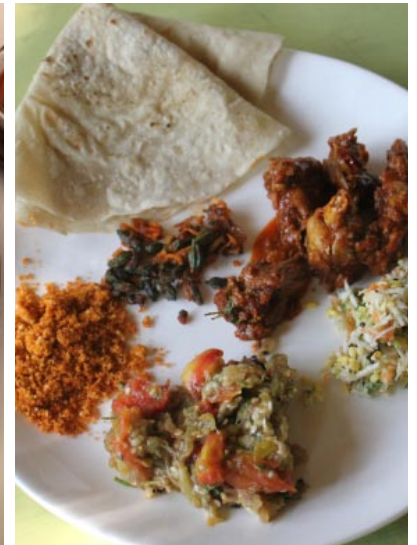


WHERE TO EAT

Hampi Bazaar has several rooftop cafes serving Indian thalis, South Indian meals, Punjabi food and Continental food. From humus and macaroni, to banana and Nutella pancakes, wood fired pizzas and German breads, Hampi's food offerings are varied and global, having been home to several Westerners who overstayed from the 60s and seen the influx of Israelis recently. Meat and alcohol are not served in Hampi because of the site's religious importance but is available just across the river and at **KSTDC's Mayura Bhuvaneshwari** at Kamalapura. **Mango Tree**, moved from its riverside patch to the main bazaar, serves excellent Indian and Western food from pancakes and poori-alu to sangria. Other hotspots include Funky Monkey and Gopi Rooftop in the main bazaar besides Goan Corner and Laughing Buddha across the river. In Hospet, Waves Bar & Restaurant at **Malligi** is very good. **Evolve Back** Hampi's Tuluva Restaurant serves a massive Vijayanagara Thali, besides Nizami cuisine at Bahmani restaurant and drinks at Howdah Bar.

WHERE TO STAY

In Hampi Bazaar **Ranjana Guesthouse** (Tel: 241696; Cell: 09448989304; Tariff: ₹1,000-1,500) located behind the Government School offers 8 simple rooms with TV and wi-fi. There's no room service, no food, but breakfast can



Hampi's food offerings are varied and global, thanks to the influx of Westerners

be arranged only on prior request; otherwise there are plenty of restaurants nearby. **Pushpa Guest House** (Tel: 241440; Cell: 094862677099; Tariff: ₹900-1,800) has 6 rooms and provides hot water and wi-fi. **Rocky Guest House** (Tel: 241951; Cell: 09449763221; Tariff: ₹800-2200 +breakfast; TE) may be a better bet with 7 rooms, restaurant, hot water, TV, parking and room service. Another option here on the Jantha Plot in Hampi Bazaar is **Gopi Guest House & Restaurant** (Tel: 241695; Cell: 08762166122, 08349241695; Tariff: ₹1,000-3,000 + breakfast; TE) with rooms with attached bath, hot water, good rooftop restaurant serving Indian thalis and Conti, wi-fi and can arrange local transport. **Lakshmi Heritage Tourist Home** (Cell:

09481715421, 09449633839; Tariff ₹1,000-1,400) with 7 rooms hot water, TV and Internet.

Across the River the **Uramma Heritage Homes** (Cell: 09448284658; Tariff: Rs.3,200-4,500) in Anegundi Village, offers seven ethnic rooms, shared bathrooms, garden dining area, wi-fi, taxi service and local cuisine. **Hampi Boulders Resort** (Cell: 09448034202; Tariff: ₹7,691-17,972 + breakfast) at Narayanpet, Bandi Harlapura PO has 20 luxury cottages with attached baths, separate sit-outs overlooking the river and a rock landscape. Activities include wildlife safaris, nature treks, fishing, beach volleyball, river rafting, rock climbing, birdwatching and visits to Hampi, Anegundi and Krishna Deva Raya Wildlife Sanctuary. The Kishkinda Heritage

Resort (Tel: 287037; Cell: 09449144167, 08762286168; Tariff: ₹3,400-5,600 + breakfast + water park; TE) near Broken Stone Bridge Cross, Sanapur, Gangavathi Taluk offers 29 AC and Non-AC cottages, amusement park, boating, swimming pool, restaurant and bar.

Shanthi Guest House (Tel: 287038; Cell: 09449260162; Tariff: ₹1,624-2,100) in Virupapur Gadde, Sanapur Post has 24 rooms and cottages with views of paddy fields or garden, multi-cuisine restaurant, 24 hr hot water, laundry, wi-fi, bike rental and travel desk. Located here also is **Mowgli Guest House** (Cell: 09481072921; Tariff: ₹1,000-2,000; TE) with 35 rooms and cottages with verandahs and balconies or swing beds, restaurant and lounge serving Italian and Israeli food, pool table, hot water, travel desk. The

Forest Department Guest House



The Goan Corner (Tel: 287002/ 94; Cell: 09448212621; Tariff: On request) in Virupapura Gaddi, Hampi Island, has an open-air dorm (24 pax) — mattresses and mosquito nets provided, a restaurant, rents crash mats for bouldering by the day and organizes transport.

In Kamalapura and Around

You can opt for **KSTDC's Mayura Bhuvaneshwari** (Tel: 241574; Cell: 08970650025; Tariff: ₹2,464-5,300) located near the ASI Museum and Kamalapura Bus Stand and has 30 rooms, 6 dorms (10-bedded), a restaurant, bar, wifi and arranges guides on request. The **Clarks Inn Hampi** (Tel: 241245; Tariff: ₹4,000 + breakfast; TE) has a 38 spacious rooms, a multi-cuisine restaurant, and lounge bar. The **Heritage Resort Hampi** (Cell: 09845602838; Tariff: ₹6,600-11,930 + breakfast; TE) at Hosamalapanagud has Deluxe, Jacuzzi and Pool Villas, the Kishkinda Restaurant a swimming pool, a games room and a spa. The **Hampi Heritage & Wilderness Resort** (Cell: 09449597874, 07019710511; Tariff: ₹4,250-7,250 + meals, jeep safari, entry fee; TE pp) near Kannada University, P.K.Halli Road, Kamalapura offers 21 cottages jeep safaris, campfire and film screenings. **Hyatt Place Hampi** (Tel: 08395-661234; Tariff: ₹4,037-9,000 + breakfast) in Vidyanagar Township, Toranagallu also offers rooms with outdoor plunge pools, a 24/7 restaurant, chic bar, outdoor pool, business centre, gym and free wi-fi.

In Hospet check out the **Royal**



Evolve Back Kamalapura Palace Jal Mahal is a promise of grand luxury

Orchid Central Keerti (Tel: 300100; Tariff: ₹6,000-1,00,000 + breakfast) on Station Road. This 4-star hotel offers 134 rooms, 24 hr dining, outdoor pool and a fitness centre.

The Hotel Malligi (Tel: 228101-08; Tariff: ₹2,800-3,600 + breakfast; TE) has 106 rooms, a restaurant, swimming pool, handicrafts shop and bookstore. **KSTDC's Hotel Mayura Vijayanagara** (Tel: 259270; Cell: 08970650002; Tariff: Rs.999-1,500 + breakfast; TE) opposite Govt. PU College, Dam Road, Dam Circle Tungabhadra Dam, Ballari can be accessed from Hospet; it has 20 rooms, a restaurant, beer parlour, gardens and dam view. On Palace Road, Sandur, head for **Shivavilas Palace Hotel** (Tel: 260223/309/310; Tariff: ₹6500-15,000 + breakfast; TE) for its 12 heritage rooms, vintage

furniture, Lambani wall hangings, dining hall, darbar hall, vintage car museum, bar and billiards room and a well-stocked library.

For more, see Hampi Accommodation Listings on pages 436-437

AROUNDS

Daroji Sloth Bear Sanctuary (21km)

Located not far from the World Heritage Site of Hampi where Lord Rama encountered the *vanaras* (monkeys), Daroji is believed to be the place where he met Jambavanth, the bear. Locals believe that the sloth bear population in the area is because of this encounter. Spread over 82.72 sq km of dry deciduous scrub, southern thorn forests and a boulder-

ridden landscape full of caves, this is indeed the perfect habitat for bears. Covering the Bilikallu Reserve Forest and Bukkasagar Reserve Forest in Sandur and Hospet taluks of Ballari district, the sanctuary was established in 1994 exclusively for the preservation of sloth bears. Since the area is surrounded by sugarcane fields and fruiting trees like Ber and Mahuva with easy access to food sources like ants, termites and forest honey, the bears live like kings. While the sanctuary is open from sunrise to sunset, the best time to visit is late afternoon when bears descend from adjacent hillocks to feed. A watchtower and machan overlooking Karadikallu Gudda (Bear Rock Hill) provide the perfect vantage point to view the bears. Over 150 species of birds can be spotted in and around Daroji — painted spurfowl,

Daraji Sloth Bear Sanctuary



grey francolin, yellow throated bulbul etc. The new Nature Interpretation centre at Daroji has large framed photos of the region's wildlife in an inner courtyard lined with palms and hunting trophies with natural light streaming in through a skylight. An inner chamber has info panels on local flora, fauna and birdlife. There's also a stuffed tiger in a glass case on display. Jungle Lodges & Resorts runs a no-frills jungle camp on Daroji road near Kamalapura. Local wildlife guide Pompayya Malemath (Cell: 094491 36252) organises 2-3 hour tours to Daroji with pick up, drop, entry fees, etc and has a hide near the Forest Department for enthusiasts of bird and animal photography.

Entry fee ₹50 Indians, ₹300 Foreigners, **Vehicle** ₹500 **Timings** 6am-6pm

TB Dam (24km)

A tributary of the Krishna River, the Tungabhadra originates as two streams Tunga and Bhadra near Shimoga in the Western Ghats, which join at Lakolli Dam, 50 km from Hospet. The Pampa Sagar or Tungabhadra Dam at Munirabad in Koppal district was opened in 1953. Parking at the entrance, visitors can take a shuttle for a guided tour of the bridge, the landscaped garden and the Sunset Point on top of the hill for excellent views from Vaikunth Guest House. There's boating facility, a small aquarium and a musical fountain with light and sound show at 7:10 pm. On August 15 every year, the 33 doors of the Tungabhadra

SHUTTERSTOCK



TB Dam has boating facility, a small aquarium, and a musical fountain

(TB) Dam are opened, a symbolic gesture practiced by all dams to celebrate India's independence.

Kanakagiri (38 km)

A famous Kannada saying goes: *Kanniddavaru Kanakagiri nodi, kaliddavaru Hampi suthi* (Those with eyes, see Kanakagiri, those with feet roam around Hampi). A small town 20 km from Gangavathi in Koppal district, Kanakagiri is located at Triveni Sangam or the sacred confluence of three rivers, Ajanta, Pushpa and Gopika.

This is the ancient spot where Kanaka *muni* undertook a rigorous penance and the skies rained gold, giving the place its name. It was also called Suvarnagiri or 'golden hill', during the reign of Ashoka when it

was his southern headquarters. Renowned for its ancient temples and wells, it allegedly had 700 temples, 700 wells and 700 dwellings of shepherds at one time! Kanakagiri is considered so sacred that people who are unable to make it to Tirupati satisfy themselves by visiting the temple here, supposedly considered the 'second Tirupati'. Parasappa Nayaka, commander of the Vijayanagar king Prouda Devaraya built the present Kanakachalapathi temple in 14th century, but an ancient shrine existed earlier. Discovered accidentally by a cowherd Hudichappa Nayaka, who noticed his cow emptying her milk over an anthill. The *saligrama* or sacred stone discovered here was enshrined and devotees venerated the linga in its



Ballari Fort, whose faulty renovation led to a death sentence for a Frenchman

garbagriha, as Laxmi Narasimha. Within the temple complex is an unusual Parameshwara statue depicting Shiva in his *nijaswaroopa* (full form) and not as a linga, besides a rare *chaturmukhi* (4-faced) idol of Lord Brahma.

The temple has beautifully carved pillars and several stone and wooden statues, plaster models with stories from the epics sculpted on its walls and Lord Vishnu's *Dasavatara* depicted on its pillars.

Sandur (42 km)

An erstwhile princely state ruled by the Ghorpade royal family of Marathas, Sandur lies on the southern edge of the original Vijayanagara metropolitan area. Of significance is

the square **Sandur Fort** dotted with bastions, accessible by a zigzag path through a series of three gateways. **Shiva Vilas Palace** of the Ghorpades has been converted into an atmospheric heritage hotel.

About 10km from Sandur is Krauncha Giri, an elliptical mountain with a narrow pass that was described by Kalidasa in his famous work, the *Megha Sandesa*.

According to legend, this gap was made when Kartikeya pierced the mountain with his *vel* (spear) in a battle with the demon Taraka hidden inside the mountain. The forest range is named Swamimale and the 8th-10th century **Kumaraswami Temple** built on a hilltop by the Rashtrakutas is believed to be the

first abode of Murugan or Karthikeya in South India.

Around 10km from Sandur towards Toranagallu, is the scenic **Narihalla**, a reservoir with two massive rock formations that became the famous filming locale of Puttana Kanagal's Kannada movie *Manasa Sarovara*.

While in Sandur stop at Kushala Kala Kendra for some interesting Lambani crafts as souvenirs. (Check out www.sandurkushalakala.com)

Ballari (62 km)

Ballari (earlier Bellary) is known for its *kote* (fort) built atop the hill Ballari Gudda. Rising around 460 ft from the plains below, the upper hill fort was built by Hanumappa Nayaka, a feudatory of the Vijayanagara Empire and the lower part by Hyder Ali in late 18th century.

The Vijayanagara ruler employed a French engineer for the renovation of the forts but on completion, it turned out that the forts were on a lower level than the opposite hill. For this strategic blunder, Hyder Ali ordered the French architect to be hanged at the fort's east gate. The grave of the unfortunate architect dates back to the year 1769.

Follow the steps from the base which pass through rocks onto a plateau and the entrance of the fort.



A sculpted pillar in Kanakagiri

Hordes of local kids gleefully slide down the sloping rockface.

Sanganakallu (66 km)

An ancient archaeological site from the Neolithic period (around 3000 BC), it is a group of hills south of a horseshoe shaped valley. Spread over 1,000 acres, it is believed to be one of the earliest settlements in South India. First excavated in 1946 and again in 1964, the discovery of an unusually large number of stone axes, tools like stone hammers, chisels and picks, besides pottery indicate that it was perhaps a Neolithic factory site. ■





ANURAG MALLICK

Agastya Tirtha Lake, where sage Agastya vanquished two demons

BADAMI

STONE IMMACULATE

■ ANURAG MALLICK &
PRIYA GANAPATHY

Badami is situated at the southernmost point of the Deccan Trap, at the mouth of a ravine between two red sandstone cliffs overlooking the cool green waters of Agastya Tirtha Lake. Here, sage Agastya vanquished the demon brothers Vatapi and Ilvala, cursing that they turn into stone hillocks. The rocky outcrop surrounding the lake on three sides bears natural peach streaks giving the place its

name Badami, or 'almond coloured'. The sun emblazons the stone ridges in myriad hues of red, pink, ochre and orange, depending on the time of the day. This spectacular setting might seem like Grand Canyon until the sight of women in vibrant Ilkal saris and men sporting spotless Gandhi topis, brings one back to reality with a bump.

Badami or Vatapi served as the capital of the great Chalukyan Empire, which brought the whole of Karnataka under one rule and controlled most of peninsular India

between the 4th and 8th centuries AD. The first king Pulakesin I (540-66 AD) strengthened the fort and was a great patron of art, culture and architecture. His grandson Pulakesin II (609-42) built a vast empire extending from Narmada in the north to Cauvery in the south. The chief city Vatapiadhishtana served as the capital from 540 to 757 AD until it was wrested by the Jain Rashtrakutas. The Chalukyas were prolific builders and used Badami's rocks as their canvas and building blocks, hewing out rock cut caves and experimenting with different types of temple architecture in all their wondrous avatars.

A virtual laboratory for Chalukyan architects, their experiments at Aihole in the 5th century were

refined at Badami in 6th and 7th centuries, culminating at Pattadakal in 7th and 8th centuries. The temples built were *sandhara* (with pradakhshina path) or *nirandhara* (without circumambulatory path), as they toyed with various superstructures over the sanctum — *shikhara* (tapered), *mundamala* (without superstructure), *rekhaprasada* (Northern smooth curvilinear), vimana (Dravidian) to Kadamba-Chalukya *shikhara* (fusion). Blending the Nagara style of north Indian temples with the older south Indian Dravidian architecture, the Chalukyas created a signature fusion style called *Vesara*.

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→ FAST FACTS

When to go Between September and February. Summer in this region is hot

Tourist office

- Dept of Tourism
Govt of Karnataka, Hotel Mayura
Chalukya KSTDC, Badami
Tel: 08357-220414
Cell: 09538430065
- Department of Tourism
Government of Karnataka
No. 49, Second Floor, Khanija Bhavan
Race Course Road, Bengaluru
Tel: 22352828
Email: info@karnatakaturism.org,
www.karnatakaturism.org,
karnatakaholidays.net

STD code 08357

Start with Badami's rock-cut caves, gateways, forts, inscriptions and sculptures. Vestiges dating to the pre-historic era dot the landscape as dolmen (stone structures for burial) and rock shelters with rare cave paintings dating to the Mesolithic Age. Short detours lead to the venerated temple towns of Banashankari and Mahakuta on to the sacred temple complex of Pattadakal, renowned Coronation City of the Chalukyan kings, 24 km away. Further downstream along the Malaprabha river, lies dusty

Aihole, hailed as the 'cradle of south Indian temple architecture'.

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

Visitors brave the heat and the ascent, fending off troupes of persistent monkeys swinging about to see Badami's key sights, found in three major clusters — the first one being the South Fort with its four famous rock-cut cave temples, then the North Fort with ruins of the fort and palace complex and the Agastya Tirtha lake and its surrounding temples and monuments.

South Fort

The rock-cut caves (Cave 1, 2, 3 and 4) hewn out of red sandstone are at four levels on the precipice of a hill connected by steep flights of stairs. Caves 1 and 2 are of northern Deccan style of 6th-7th century and similar to Ellora Caves. In contrast to the spartan exteriors, the interiors are luxuriously carved with ornate pillars, delicate friezes, sculptures of gods and goddesses, bracket figures of amorous demigods and ceilings embellished with elaborate flowers and foliage.

Cave 1: Climb around 40 steps to reach the lowermost and oldest cave, 59 ft above ground level. Dating to 6th century, it is dedicated to Lord Shiva and enshrines a *linga*. The side wall has captivating figures of the 18-armed Nataraja in his cosmic dance Tandava, striking 81 Natya mudras (dance poses). Guides will often conceal various arms to explain the dance postures. The



Lord Vishnu seated on Sheshnaga, a wonderful example of rock-cut art

adjoining wall depicts Goddess Durga as Mahishasura Mardhini and once inside the 70 ft X 65 ft verandah are imposing sculptures of Harihara (half-Shiva, half-Vishnu form) and Ardhanarishvara or fused half male-half feminine form of Shiva and Parvati. The ceilings vividly showcase erotic couples.

Cave 2: Walk through a forecourt and climb 64 steps to enter Cave 2, flanked by celestial guardians and pot bellied dwarves. Four ornate pillars with carvings of the mythical *yali* support the temple, which has less detailed carvings than the first cave. Dedicated to Lord Vishnu, he is depicted in his avatars as Varaha the boar rescuing Bhoodevi (Mother Earth), Vamana in his Trivikrama pose vanquishing Bali and Vishnu

riding his *vahana* Garuda. The ceiling is dotted with images of soaring celestial couples and the lotus motif encircled by fish and *swastika* symbols. Friezes show the *samudra manthan* (churning of the ocean) and scenes of Krishna's childhood. King Kirtivarman I, who ascended the throne in 567, ordered the carving of this temple in 578.

Cave 3: Trudge up 60 steps to the largest and most spectacular of the four caves, with the richest traces of painting. Marvel at the grand figure of Lord Vishnu seated on the coiled snake Adishesha, with smaller carved images of Indra on his elephant Airavata, Brahma on a swan and Shiva riding the bull, on the ceiling. Numerous forms of Lord Vishnu are depicted here including Narasimha,

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→ GETTING THERE

Air Nearest airport: Hubballi Airport, which is linked to Bengaluru, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Tirupathi and Jindal Vidyanagar by SpiceJet and StarAir. Taxi to Badami from Hubballi costs ₹2,700 appx, depending on AC or non-AC taxi

Rail Badami Railway Station is connected to Bengaluru, Mysuru, Hubballi, Vijayapura and Solapur, by Solapur Express, Gol Gumbaz Express, Secunderabad-Hubli Express, Varanasi-Hubli Express etc.

Road 500 km from Bengaluru via Chitradurga, Hospet and Kushtagi; turn right after Gajendragarh towards Badami (70 km/1.5 hrs from there)

Bus A deluxe bus from Bengaluru's Majestic Stand leaves daily at 8.30 pm and reaches Badami at 7.30 am

Viraata purusha, Harihara and Trivikrama. The sculptures give insight into the lifestyle in ancient times, especially trends in fashion, jewellery and hairstyle.

Cave 4: Located east of Cave 3 and 10 ft lower is the smallest and most recent of the cave temples. An 8th century Jain cave, two *dwarapalas* (gate keepers) guard the entrance. The walls have major carvings of Parshvanath, Mahavira on a lion throne and Bahubali in standing posture covered in vines, besides seated *tirthankaras* and other Jain iconography. Nearby is an 18th century Muslim tomb of Siddi Abdul Aziz Malik.

Carved idols inside the Badami Cave



PRASHANT PANJIAR

North Fort

A dramatic climb on the path behind the Archaeological Museum leads to a sandstone chasm with fortified gateways and early 7th century ruins of the north fort, a good place to get a bird's eye view of Badami. An early morning climb is rewarding for photography as the valley is bathed in the soft glow of sunrise and the cave temples to the south side are reflected in the shimmering Agastya Tirtha Lake. The multi-storey *mandapas*, an underground chamber that served as a treasury or private audience hall, numerous platforms, double fortification walls and remnants of a treasury, granary, watchtower and three Shiva shrines, are worth a look. The outer walls of the Lower Shivalaya, have been dismantled and only the towered sanctuary remains. The Upper Shivalaya has many friezes and sculptures depicting Krishna's life on the west wall and episodes from the Ramayana on the south face — Kumbhakarna being awoken from slumber and Rama vanquishing demons. The square *vimana* or tower over the well-preserved sanctuary is crowned by a *kuta* or square. The Malegitti Shivalaya happens to be the oldest and finest preserved example of the Dravida style of early Chalukyan architecture.

AGASTYA TIRTHA & AROUND

Agastya Tirtha Lake

Named after Sage Agastya, the jade green Agastya Tirtha or Bhutanatha Lake is an artificial lake constructed

Photographs by SHUTTERSTOCK



Bhutanatha Temple, dedicated to Shiva as the god of souls, spirits and ghosts

in 5th century, to trap the rainwater runoff escaping down the mountain. It's believed the waters flow through medicinal herbs and minerals imbuing it with healing powers.

Around twenty temples are spread around the tank including shrines of Nagamma, Vishnu and Shiva, chiefly the Bhutanatha temple. The gradient of the lake near the temple is 7m and 10m on the far side. In the rainy season, the moment the water level touches the last step, the water automatically drains out instead of flooding the temple. Even at times of extreme heat and drought, the water remains. The only time it dried out completely was in 1942.

Bhutanatha Temple

On the lake's eastern end stands the Bhutanatha Temple dedicated to Shiva's form as the god of souls, spirits and ghosts. It dates back to 7th century with the outer *mantapa* added in 11th century during the late Kalyani Chalukyan age. The temple was built in that corner specifically to enhance its beauty at dusk. The platform extends into the east end of the tank, a picturesque setting. During the monsoon, a waterfall cascades down the cliffs in the backdrop, adding to its charm. The Shiva linga in the shrine was a later addition after the original deity was removed. Behind the temple a small path leads to some boulder

carvings of Vishnu and his incarnations and Jain figures seated on a throne.

Mallikarjuna Temple

This temple cluster, located on the northeast side of the tank dates to the 11th century. The typical late Chalukya features include plain walls, angled eaves over the *mantapas* and stepped pyramidal towers with deeply carved and closely spaced horizontal courses. The shrine, dedicated to Shiva, is a smaller building to the right of the main temple. Its intricate geometrical columns have alternate cubical and cylindrical designs, separated by polygonal bands.

Yellamma or Suryanarayana Temple

Located at the west-end of the tank, the 11th century Yellamma temple of late Chalukya period is notable for its tower. Its crimped and layered roof is a hybrid form of the curved *shikharas* of north India and Dravidian pyramids. The east-facing idol has a chariot style *shikhara*. Since it was empty for some time, an idol of Yellamma Devi was installed.

Koshtaraya Cave Temple

South east of the Bhutanatha Temple in a natural cavern under the cliff is Koshtaraya Cave.

According to local folklore, this was the abode of a king suffering

The thousand-year-old Yellamma Temple, built in the late Chalukya period



Sidlaphadi cave drawings are fascinating examples of prehistoric art

Sidlaphadi cave drawings: Painted in blood

Rock art in the form of engravings and paintings dating back to the Neolithic period (4000-800BCE) can be found all over the eastern part of North Karnataka. There are nearly a dozen sites of painted shelters around Badami dating back to the Mesolithic Age (10,000BCE). A short hike to Kutaganakeri (or Kutakankeri), 5km from Badami, beyond a cluster of huts in a shrub jungle, lie the fascinating prehistoric **Sidlaphadi cave drawings**. Literally 'Lightning Rock' in Kannada, the name is derived from the gaping holes in the natural rock arch, formed when it was struck by lightning. Similar, but more clearly defined are the cave drawings in nearby **Ranganathaguda**. The images of boars, striped animals and stick figures of humans with exaggerated trunks or spinal chords,

have no parallels in the rest of South India. Besides geometrical designs, there are scenes of significant social performances such as hunting, group dance, burying the dead, etc. which are less frequent. It is remarkable how they have survived centuries of storms, winds and fluctuating temperature. The outline drawings, most commonly in colours like dark red, green and white are in mineral colours mixed with *handi rakt* (boar's blood). Since many of these cave shelters are situated on rock faces that are quite difficult to access, they have fortunately been untouched by modern human intervention. Physical fitness and good footwear is imperative as the route is rocky and thorny. Guide Chandregunda Katageri (Tel: 08357-240597, 09448823161).

from *kushta rog* or leprosy, who quarantined himself in here. The Agastya Tirtha contained holy mountain water that flowed through Ayurvedic herbs thus acquiring medicinal properties. The ritual of his daily bath in the waters of this tank, miraculously cured the king and the cave was named Koshtaraya in his memory.

Kappe Arabhatta Inscription

A cliff near the Bhutanatha temple overlooking the northeast end of the lake at Tattukoti has a 7th century inscription in old Kannada, believed to be the first example of a *tripadi* in Kannada. The tripadi or native three-metre verse is a cryptic form of

A flower merchant in Badami



literature reflected in the *vachanas* and witticisms of poet Sarvajna. It eulogises Kappe Arabhatta, believed to be a Chalukyan warrior.

Archaeological Museum

Beyond the caves, stands the museum with unusual exhibits and sculptures including Lajja-Gauri images of the fertility cult which flourished in the era and an ancient Buddhist cave temple, the only natural cave among all the other rock-cut temples. Timings: 9am-5pm.

Jambulinga Temple

Hidden by the tall buildings in the centre of Badami is the temple constructed in the year 699. The temple depicts Shiva as the Lord of the Jambu tree and has three shrines dedicated to the trinity. Several temples bear the characteristic Vesara style of Chalukyan art — a combination of North and South Indian styles.

Dattatreya Temple

The 10th to 12th century temple is dedicated to Lord Dattatreya, who is shown with a single head and four hands like Vishnu, seated serenely in *padmasana* (lotus position). Carved emblems of the Trimurti – Brahma's swan, Vishnu's Garuda and Shiva's Nandi are also seen. Interestingly, the right earlobe jewellery and hair decoration represent Shiva, but the other side depicts Vishnu.

Pallava Inscriptions

Badami is noted for two early inscriptions dating events in history



Back view of the Jambulinga Temple

in the 6th century. The inscription on a hillock dated 543 AD is considered the oldest and reflects the period of Pulakesin I (Vallabheswara) and gives a detailed account of the fort. Near the Bhutanata temple, on a rock, another ancient Pallava inscription mentions Mamalla Pallava's victory over the Chalukyas of Vatapi in 642 CE.

SHOPPING

Ancient Arts Emporium (Tel: 08357-221704) at Badami Court stocks souvenirs. Ilkal (36 km from Aihole) is famous for its traditional handloom, art silk and silk saris; buy

directly from craftsmen near the Banashankari temple. The area is also known for its wooden doorframes with *vattala* or carved strips, which represent the prosperity of the owner; the wider the doorframe, the more affluent the owner. A number of bangle shops and other stalls sell religious items, and Banashankari's legendary betel leaves, the sweetest in the country, vouch locals!

WHERE TO EAT

In Badami, Karwar Restaurant at Badami Court serves a wide variety of Indian and International cuisine. In town, Hotel Rajsangam (New)

dishes out pure veg fare. In Aihole, eat at Hotel Chalukya or KSTDC Hotel Mayura Yatri Nivas.

WHERE TO STAY

The choice of hotels is limited for the discerning tourist.

Clarks Inn (Tel: 08357-220150 Cell 09717170573, 09650500634; Tariff: Rs 3,500-5,500 +breakfast) at Veerpulakeshi Circle, Badami Main Road, offers 40 rooms, The Bridge restaurant/coffee shop and, The Illusion Bar. **The Badami Court** (Tel: 220207, 220230-32; Tariff: 3,750-5,600 + breakfast) Tariff Rs 3,750-5,600 + breakfast) is a swanky option with AC rooms, Restaurant, swimming pool, travel desk, Internet, room service and breakfast

Naganath Temple erotic sculpture



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on the house. **Mookambika Deluxe** (Tel: 220067, 220997; Tariff: ₹1,250-1,950) on Station Road has rooms with TV and Internet in the lobby. The KSTDC guest house, **Hotel Mayura Chalukya** (Tel: 220046; Cell: 08970650024; Tariff: ₹1,000-2,750) is fairly decent and has 26 rooms, a restaurant, a beer bar and expansive gardens. **Hotel Anand Deluxe** (Tel:220074; Cell: 09448559892; Tariff: ₹700-2,200) near the KSRTC Bus Stand, Station Road has 50 rooms, a restaurant and bar. **The Heritage Resort** (Tel: 220250 Cell 09449852711; Tariff: ₹2,400-3,900 + breakfast) on Station Road has 8 rooms and 6 cottages, a veg restaurant and Internet in the lobby only.

For more, see *Badami Accommodation Listings* on page 430

AROUNDS

Banashankari (4 km)

A short drive northwest of Badami leads to Cholachigud in the Tilakaaranya forest where the idol of a fierce black goddess astride a lion tramples a demon underfoot. She is goddess Banashankari or Shakambari, a form of Parvati who was the *kuladevi* (family deity) of the Chalukyas of Kalyan. According to the *Skanda Purana*, the goddess destroyed a demon called Durgamasura at this spot and stood to protect the 'vana' or 'bana' (forest) around. Originally built by the late Chalukyas, the present Dravidian style temple belongs to the 17th century. The

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Here reigns goddess Banashankari, a form of Parvati, who destroyed a demon

black stone idol depicts the powerful eight-armed goddess seated on a snarling lion and trampling a hapless demon. Coconut groves line Harida Tirtha, the sacred pond in front of the temple, enclosed on three sides by stone *mantapas* with inner colonnades. A beautifully carved *Deepa Sthambha* (pillar of lamps) rests on carved elephants, facing the temple and tank. One could climb inside the pillar to the top for a great view. The annual *jatre* or temple festival in January is called *banada-hunnime*, celebrated with elaborate pujas, village fair, car festival, street plays, circus and stalls. An ancient Parvati Temple is located nearby. Further down the road, artisans sell intricate woodcarvings.

Naganath Temple (10 km)

A short drive east of Badami off the Banashankari-Mahakuta road lies Naganathankolla with the Naganath Temple secretively tucked away in a pretty little forest clearing. One of the early Chalukyan temples, the ancient Shiva shrine is flanked by figures of Bhairava and Chamunda and a massive Nandi bedecked with garlands and bells guarding the entrance. All the windows are remarkable for their exquisite, intricate lattice work while the gorgeous carvings on the pillars depict *Mithuna* couples and ancient fashion trends — women sporting various hairstyles, calf-length skirts, pant-like garments and quirkily mismatched earrings!

Mahakuta (16 km)

An ancient Banyan tree with gnarled roots looms over a temple complex with a tank enclosed by the hills. Mahakuta was the abode of sage Agastya and believed to be the site where he annihilated Vatapi and Ilvala; transforming the slain demon brothers into two hillocks which still stand. Hailed as *Dakshina Kashi*, Mahakuta was once a great pilgrim centre for Shaivas and Saktas, worshippers of the Shakti cult. The 7th century Chalukyan temple complex is a confluence of north and south Indian styles of architecture. A stone pillar commemorates a Chalukyan victory with inscriptions praising Mahakuta. Other epigraphical evidence record

Mahakuteshwara Temple

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donations of gold, a silver umbrella and land grants made to the temple by Chalukyan king Vinayaditya's mistress Vinapoti and Chalukyan ruler Mangalesha, dating 690 AD. Inside the large walled courtyard are two Shiva temples on either side of a spring-fed tank.

Vishnu Pushkarni

The sacred tank lies between the two main temples. Water flows into it continuously from a natural mountain spring. In the middle of the tank is a small pavilion with *Panchalinga-Mukha* sculpture bearing a five-faced aspect of Shiva. The stepped tank has a beautiful waterspout shaped like a cow's face besides other sculptures. There's an underwater shrine with a *linga* in one corner of the tank; one has to duck under the water surface to access it.

Mahakuteshwara Temple

The older of the two temples, it is dedicated to Shiva and built in Dravidian style, surrounded by smaller shrines. The sanctum displays delicate scrollwork, a statue of Ardhanarishvara and scenes from the epics. Its outer walls are embellished with sculptures of the early Chalukyan era, including images of Varaha rescuing Bhudevi, Vishnu motif of Venugopala and other deities. There's an unusual image of Ganesha holding his broken tusk as a pen while writing the Mahabharata. Several naga stone tablets are scattered around. A smaller linga with five faces of Shiva sits on

**The Pattadakal temple complex is a UNESCO World Heritage site**

a small stone pedestal in the outer courtyard. The *jali* work or windows with exquisite trelliswork exhibit the Chalukyan love for ornate windows.

Mallikarjuna Temple

Located on the other side of the tank, the temple has a similar dome-like tower and tiers with miniature shrines. There are rich carvings at the entrance and ceiling of the columned *mantap* inside depicting Hindu deities and amorous *mithuna* couples. Inside the enclosure, are various smaller shrines, with detailed wall carvings of Shiva with Parvati.

Pattadakal (24 km)

Pattada-kallu literally 'coronation stone' was the second most important

Chalukyan city and served as a royal ceremonial centre where kings were crowned. Located at a sacred spot where the river Malaprabha became *uttaravahini* or took a northward turn, the town was also known as Kisuvola or Raktapura 'red town' after the red sandstone used to build the temples. UNESCO declared Pattadakal a World Heritage Site as it has fine examples of Nagara (northern), Dravida (southern) and Vesara, a fusion of both styles of architecture in the same temple complex, the only one of its kind in India. Most of the temples are from 7th and 8th centuries and located in a riverside complex set amidst landscaped gardens. Each of its 10 major temples (nine dedicated to

Shiva and one Jain shrine) display interesting architectural features, making Pattadakal an important site to study the development of temple architecture in south India.

Kada Siddheshwara Temple

Inside the temple complex the small, partly damaged early 8th century shrine, has a fine sculpture of Shiva holding a serpent and trident in his raised arms with Parvati standing right beside him. The outer walls of this sanctum sanctorum depict Lord Ardhanarishvara on the northern wall, Harihara on the west and Lakulisha to the south. The *shikhara* (spire) is of an intricate northern Rekhanagara style.

Jambulingeshwara Temple

Built in north Indian style with characteristic curvilinear *shikhara*, the *sukanasi* or 'parrot beak' like projection over the entrance of the sanctum sanctorum depicts Shiva in his *tandava* pose with Parvati and Nandi by his side.

Galaganatha Temple

East of the Jambulinga temple, the shrine is in ruins but the southern side has a sculpture of Shiva wearing a garland of skulls killing the demon Andhakasura. The tower is in the northern Rekhanagara style and animal fables from the Panchatantra are depicted in the basement of the eastern moulding.

Lajja Gauri

A strange stillness fills the air at Siddannakolla, 7km from Aihole. A faint gravel path leads to the ancient Sangameshwara temple in a valley. Obscured by trees with only the gurgling sound of a waterfall to guide one to the sacred site, the mystique of the divine figure squatting under the crevasse of a huge rock, is palpable. She is Lajja Gauri, a mysterious, lotus-headed Goddess, always portrayed with legs splayed and raised in a primal manner suggesting either birthing or sexual receptivity. The soles of her feet are turned upward, her arms bent upwards and each hand holds a lotus. The Rig Veda mentions the primordial female divinity as Adishakti or Mother Goddess. She is the essential female, divine source

of life and creative power of the receptive. The human form and the intercourse/birth pose are a metaphor for creation. Lajja Gauri suggests life, creativity and abundance; her sacred images are found near springs, waterfalls and sources of running water, symbols of life-giving sustenance. Sometimes they are nestled in sacred groves to remind people that trees are vaults of water. She is carved on *kumbhas* (clay pots), as an assurance of fullness. For centuries now, streams of childless women have worshipped Lajja Gauri — offering stone cradles to fulfill their wish. Most often these sacred sites are out-of-bounds for men during *pujas* all year round. Close to the lovely waterfall lies a low-roofed meditation chamber and also a shrine of Lord Shiva with the idols of the *sapta-matrikes* (seven goddesses).



The Sangameshwara Temple attracts devotees from far and wide

Chandrashekhara Temple

South of Galaganatha is a squat shrine without a tower with *dwarapalas* (doorkeepers) guarding the entrance to the sanctum that houses a Shiva linga with Nandi on a platform facing the temple.

Kashi Vishwanatha Temple

Located west of the complex, this is the last of the north Indian style temples. Also known as Kashivishveshwara temple, the sculptures on the wall depict various forms of Shiva. The pillars inside have intricate friezes based on the Shiva Purana, Bhagavat Purana and the Ramayana, chiefly Ravana lifting Mount Kailasha and Kalyanasundaramurti, the marriage of Shiva and Parvati.

Sangameshwara Temple

Across the lawns, past the older and simpler temples, are the more complex south Indian *vimana* temples with their stepped pyramidal formation. The oldest temple in the complex, the Sangameshwara shrine was built during the reign of King Vijayaditya Satyashraya (697–733 CE) and is thus also known as Vijayeshwara temple. The patron's death in 734 CE left the temple unfinished, which was completed in later centuries. Above the eaves are friezes of *ganas* (dwarves) with expressions of struggling to hold the temple aloft.

Virupaksha Temple

The Virupaksha and Mallikarjuna temples commemorate the

Chalukyan victory over the Pallavas of Kanchi and were erected by two sister-queens. The biggest and most ornate temple in the complex, the Virupaksha temple was built by Queen Lokamahadevi and was also called Lokeshwara. The grand structure is the only complete temple to be built in the 8th century and allegedly inspired by Kailasanatha temple at Kanchipuram and in turn, inspired the Krishna temple at Ellora. Images of Lingodbhavamurti, Nataraja, Ravananugraha and Ugranarasimha are excellent. Don't miss the frieze that depicts a bull and an elephant in the same sculpture. The temple has a huge gateway, several inscriptions and a pavilion

Aihole architecture



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facing the temple housing a massive Nandi. The deep-green stone bull figure covered in a red floral cape shows early use of colour. A columned hall leads to the inner sanctum, which houses a Shiva linga that is worshipped even today.

Mallikarjuna Temple

The temple built by Trailokyamahadevi, the queen of Vikramaditya II was originally called Trailokeshwara Temple. Similar in plan to Virupaksha but smaller, it has sculptures of Mahishasuramardini and Ugranarasimha. The ceiling has panels of Gajalakshmi and Nataraja with Parvati while the pillars depict the life of Krishna. The friezes show amorous couples, everyday scenes in ancient times and a woman with an 8th century musical instrument.

Papanatha Temple

Situated ½ km south of Mallikarjuna temple away from the cluster of eight shrines, the grand temple is known for its mixture of Dravida and Nagara architectural styles. It has an elaborately carved 16-pillared main hall with an impressive image of Nataraja in the centre of the ceiling with scenes from the Ramayana and Mahabharata.

Jain Temple

Locally known as Jain Narayan Temple, the 9th century shrine was built by Krishna II of the Rashtrakutas. Styled on Kailasanatha temple of Kanchipuram, it has two beautifully chiselled stone elephants at the entrance, lathe-turned sandstone

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Durga Temple in Aihole, the first commercial capital of the Chalukyas

pillars in the mandapa and a Jina statue in the northern eave. Excavations have revealed an older brick shrine under the present one.

Aihole (34 km)

Located on the banks of the Malaprabha river about 10km from Pattadakal, Aihole was the first commercial capital of the Badami Chalukyas between 6th and 8th centuries. Also called Aivalli, Ayyavole, Arya-Hole and Aryapura, it is considered to be the birthplace of Dravidian temple architecture. It became a stronghold of the Rashtrakutas in 9th and 10th centuries and the late Chalukyas of Kalyani in 11th-12th century. After the fall of Hampi, the area came under the Adil Shahi dynasty of

Vijayapura when many monuments were used for residences and storage. Legend has it that after avenging the death of his father, Sage Jamdagni and killing *kshatriyas* (warriors), Lord Parasurama washed his bloodied battle-axe in the Malaprabha river, which turned red with blood. The village ladies who had come to fill water and wash clothes at the river, shrieked 'Ai hole', *ai* (exclamation of terror), *hole* (river); hence the name. A natural axe-shaped rock on the river, north of the village bears footprints, adding credence to tale. The region's red earth is also ascribed to this legend. There are over 120 Chalukyan stone and cave temples spread across the rocky outcrops and fields. Some temple enclosures are in the centre of the village, fenced off

by the ASI with fine specimens of Chalukyan sculpture on display at Aihole's museum. It also has a handy guide *Glorious Aihole* with maps and info. Of most importance here are 16 free-standing structures and 4 rock cut shrines with Hindu, Jain and Buddhist temples and monasteries.

Durga Temple

Aihole's best known and most impressive monument, the horseshoe-shaped Durga temple seems more like a Buddhist *chaitya* at Ajanta Caves. The semi-circular apse and gallery wrapping around the sanctum are unusual. The name is a misnomer and derived from '*durgagudi*' meaning 'temple within

Statue of sacred bull Nandi in Aihole



the fort'. Set on a high plinth, the temple's elaborate friezes depict *gandharvas* and celestial beings besides episodes from the Ramayana. The piece de resistance is a niche with the ferocious multi-armed figure of Mahishasuramardini slaying the buffalo demon and unusual depictions of the boar-headed incarnation of Vishnu and goddess Lakshmi. Filling the niches are comical pot-bellied *ganas* or dwarves in sharp contrast to the larger awe-inspiring deities.

Suryanarayana Temple

Next to Durga temple is the shrine of Suryanarayana with a pyramidal shikhara. The sanctum has a statue of the sun god on a chariot with his companions Usha (dawn) and Sandhya (dusk) and seven small horses carved at the bottom.

Lad Khan Temple

One of the earliest temples with beautiful latticed windows, the temple dates back to 450 AD. Originally a royal assembly and marriage hall, it was used as a residence by Adil Shahi commander Lad Khan. The hall has Shiva accompanied by Nandi and the porch projects outward with carvings of loving couples on its ornate pillars. An upper sanctum has images of Vishnu and Surya, the sun god, carved on its walls and offers a good view of the village.

Gaudargudi

Standing next to Lad Khan but much older and more open from the sides



Gaudargudi Temple, one of the earliest Hindu temples to have a pradakshin patha

is Gaudargudi (also Gaudergudi). It is among the earliest temples where architects included *pradakshina patha* (circumambulatory path) in Hindu temple design. The sanctum is empty but has a Gajalakshmi on its lintel with an inscription dedicating the temple to Gauri, an aspect of goddess Parvati. It is possible over time Gauriragudi (Gauri's temple) got phonetically corrupted to Gaudargudi. Next to it is a large 10th century stepwell with carved sculptures on the walls en route to Chakragudi; its 7th century Nagara-style tower is noteworthy.

Aihole Museum and Art Gallery

The small museum next to Durga temple has a wealth of sculptures salvaged from Aihole and around.

The outdoor display includes excavated statues, artwork, *virakallu* (hero stones) and demolished temple parts while an indoor collection exhibits better preserved statues of various divinities. Don't miss the life size depiction of Lajja Gauri in birthing position with a lotus head.

Ravanaphadi Cave

Northwest of the village and less than a kilometre uphill, lies one of Aihole's oldest rock-cut cave temples. The court hall with two carved pillars in front is flanked by life-size sculptures of guardians. Dating to 6th century the sandstone rock cut cave has remarkable sculpted figures of Shiva as Ardhanarishvara, Harihara and a spirited dancing figure of a



Nandi Mandapa at the Mallikarjuna Temple complex

glorious Nataraja holding aloft a sinuous serpent.

Hucchappayya Matha

Separate from other temple clusters, about 1km south of the Durga temple complex on the far side of Aihole village are two Hindu monuments – a large Shiva temple in the front and a monastery no longer in use. The 7th century temple displays amorous *mithuna* couples on the columns and mandapa walls including outré ones like a horse-headed woman seeking the attention of a shocked man!

Hucchappayya Gudi

About a few hundred meters southwest of Hucchappayya matha, in the fields towards the river is this early Chalukya period (6th-7th

century) temple. It is notable for its intricate pillar carvings in the portico and inside the shrine, besides artwork on the inner walls and ceiling. Look out for Narasimha, Nataraja, Shaiva dvarapalas, Garuda besides scenes of daily life depicting dancers, musicians and devotees. In a strange penchant for horse-headed women, to be found here are panels depicting bearded older men being embraced on the eastern porch column.

Jain Meguti Temple

A climb uphill southeast of Aihole past a two-storied Buddhist temple leads to one of its oldest shrines. The temple is dedicated to Lord Mahavira and a stone staircase connects the lower sanctum to the upper level, which overlooks Aihole Fort and the

village below. The name Meguti is a phonetic corruption of Melgudi or 'upper temple'. It is notable for the inscription by poet Ravikirti on a slab in the outer wall dating back to 634, mentioning the royal patronage to the temple by Pulakeshin II.

Other Temple Complexes

Scattered all over Aihole and the riverside of the Malaprabha, are various significant temple complexes. West of the Durga temple, near the ticket office at the entrance is the **Ambigergudi temple complex**, a troika of shrines archaeologically noted for the 1st-3rd century redware bowls and ruins of an older brick temple, revealed in excavations. The **Kuntigudi complex**, a quartet of temples in the middle of a market street crammed between houses has sculptures with unusual perspectives. The **Maddin temple group** in the heart of town uses green imported stone for its fine lathe-turned pillars, not seen anywhere else in Aihole. **Triyambakeshvara temple group** in the village, including the Rachigudi and Desiyar temples, are from 10th-11th centuries, bridging the Rashtrakuta and Late Chalukya periods. **Mallikarjuna temple complex** of five Hindu shrines explores the square form with portico, *sabha mandap*, sanctum and



Meguti Jain Temple

temple tower displaying square mouldings. **Jyotirlinga temple complex** with sixteen Shiva shrines has lovely Nandi *mantapas* and a large stepwell. **Ramalinga/Ramalingeshvara temple complex** is located on the banks of the Malaprabha river, 2.5 km south of Durga temple. Other shrines include the popular **Huchimalli temple** with a larger than life statue of Vishnu seated atop Adishesha, the **Chikkigudi group**, **Tarabasappa temple**, **Umamaheshwari temple** and a two-storey Buddhist temple on Meguti Hill.

Where to Stay

The Hotel Mayura Yatri Nivas (Cell: 09591164103; Tariff: ₹1,200-1,500) has 24 rooms, a restaurant, Internet and room service. ■

#Awesom Karnataka





Photographs by ANURAG MALLICK

The renowned Bhavanishankar Temple in Hubballi

HUBBALLI-DHARWAD

TWIN CITIES

■ ANURAG MALLICK AND
PRIYA GANAPATHY

The twin cities of Hubballi-Dharwad are often uttered in the same breath though they lie 17km apart. Historically, the region came under the rule of several dynasties including the Chalukyas, Rashtrakutas, Vijayanagara, Adilshahi, Mysuru kingdom, the Marathas and finally the British. Hubballi, literally *hu-balli* (flower creeper) known as Hubli till recently, was a commercial centre famous for trade in cotton, saltpetre and iron in the past. Under the Vijayanagara rayas, old Hubli, which also went by other names like Rayara Hubli, Eleya Purvadahalli and

Purballi, was home to an ancient Bhavanishankar temple and an old Jain *basadi*. The British established a factory here during Adilshahi rule, which was looted by Shivaji in 1673. The Mughals conquered old Hubli and handed the administration to the Nawab of Savanur who built an extension called Majidpura. But the establishment of new Hubli in Durgadabail (Fort Maidan) is attributed to Basappa Shettar, an enterprising trader. Hubballi has a famous flower market and a locality called Gardenpeth, hinting at its enduring connection with flowers. With the historic landmark of Kittur Rani Chennamma Circle in the heart of town honouring the legendary

warrior princess who fought the British, the city is also famous for its Sufi shrines. However, today Hubballi has established itself as an important industrial and commercial centre of Karnataka state.

Dharwad served as the gateway between Malenadu (Western Ghats) and Bayaluseeme (the plains). Its ancient Sanskrit name *Dwarawata* (from *dwara* or doorway and *wata/wada* or town) gave credence to its strategic importance as the entrance to the hills. For centuries, Dharwad, located about 800m above sea level was the resting place for travellers and a place that offered a pleasant climate. It is believed that around the 14th century, Dhar Rao, an official of the Vijayanagara kings built the fort in the heart of Dharwad town in 1403. Adilshah, the Sultan of Vijayapura, who went on to build a fort in the area known as Manna Killa, later called Nazratabad, captured it in 1573. Today an educational hub, it was home to several stalwarts from the field of literature and music—from Gangubai Hangal, Mallikarjun Mansur to Da Ra Bendre, thus earning the tag ‘The Cultural Capital of Karnataka’.

Several notable educational institutions like IIT, University of Agricultural Sciences, Karnataka University, Indian Institute of Information Technology in Dharwad and KIMS, Karnataka State Law University, KLE Technology University in Hubballi besides the mushrooming IT companies have put the twin cities at the forefront of education and business. Given

their growth potential, the cities have been selected under the Smart City Project and also the Solar City, Green City master plans. Hubballi-Dharwad are also popular textile hubs famous for handlooms and fostering the development of unique handicraft traditions of the region—the 1000-year-old weaving tradition of *Ilkal* in Bagalkot district which spawned the famous *Ilkal* saris in cotton and silk and the unusual geometric *kasuti* embroidery of Dharwad. Dharwad is also famous for a delicious sweet item, the brown-toned sugar-dusted Dharwad *peda*, which has earned a GI tag.

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

HUBBALLI

Bhavanishankar Temple

Set in the old Hubballi area of the city, the ancient temple constructed

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→ FAST FACTS

When to go October to February

Tourist offices

● Office of the Assistant Director 📍

Department of Tourism

Near Rangayana, Behind Hotel

Mandara, College Road,

Dharwad

Tel: 0836-2744522

Cell: 08497859699 (DTC)

STD code 0836

in Nagara style was allegedly built by the renowned temple architect of yore, Jakanachari. Dedicated to Lord Shiva and Parvati, the small temple bears remarkable floral motifs and Puranic carvings on its walls and sculptures of Lord Shiva, Ganapathi, Narasimha, Brahma and Parvati.

Aasar Shariff Dargah

Constructed by Mohammed Adil Shah in 1646, the Aasar Shariff dargah enshrines two strands of hair from the beard of Prophet Mohammed, in a casket. The relics are displayed to the public during the annual 2-day urs (fair) during Id, the birth anniversary of the prophet, which draws thousands of pilgrims to the shrine.

The gate to a Sufi saint's shrine



Nrupatunga Hill

A small hillock offering a view of Hubballi city, locals love to spend a few relaxing moments or bring excited children to the kids park here. Pack a snack as shops and eateries are scarce. Parking is at the base and it's a 1km walk to the hilltop. Occasionally, troupes from Kala Kendra perform local songs and dances on the weekends.

Syed Fateh Shah Vali

This shrine of a Sufi saint draws Hindus and Muslim devotees alike. In 1780, Tipu Sultan visited the dargah after he won the campaign against the Nawab of Savanur. The tomb is marked by a large entrance gate. Sadly, the natural tank known as Lal Talab in its precincts doesn't exist today.

Gangubai Hangal Musical Museum

Hindustani classical music legend Dr Gangubai Hangal was born in Dharwad but lived in a simple home called Ganga Lahiri, in Deshpande Nagar in Hubballi. For years, till the day she passed away, her home remained a major landmark for frequent visitors. Today a portion of the legendary home has been converted into a museum by her grandson to showcase the richness of Indian classical music. Displaying her awards, citations, gramophone recordings, souvenirs, photos and rare centuries old musical instruments collected from all over, the place is a treasure trove and a fitting tribute to India's musical maestros and continues to be a big draw.



Both motorcycles and elephants find their space on Hubballi's streets

Siddharoodha Mutt

A prominent religious centre for Advaita philosophy, this was where Gurunatha Roodha Swamiji, a reformer saint lived and preached. Devotees throng the sprawling complex, meditate in the prayer hall and visit his Samadhi. It is believed that one's wishes are granted by praying at the peaceful sacred place. The car festival during Mahashivaratri is celebrated with much pomp here. **Timings** 6am-6pm.

Moorusavira Mutt

Another famous religious centre founded in the 12th century that marks the place where Sri Channabasavanna, a revered Lingayat saint halted with 3000 (literally 'mooru savira' in Kannada) other *shivasharanas* (saints) enroute to the holy place of Ulavi.

Indira Gandhi Glass House

Inaugurated by former PM Indira Gandhi, the large impressive glasshouse in a garden setting (similar to the one in Lalbagh, Bengaluru) is a popular location near the old bus stand. Though it has seen better days when its toy train and musical fountains were functional and during flower shows, today it is a wooded place scattered with sculptures and statues, ideal for a walk or to relax with a cup of tea or coffee at the kiosk. **Entry fee** ₹10.

Unkal Lake

A cool scenic sunset spot that has become a local favourite, thanks to boating facilities and decent landscaping. Located 3km from town on the way to Dharwad, the 110-year-old lake is the main source of water for Hubballi. **Entry fee** ₹10.

Chandramouleshwara Temple

Narrow lanes lead to the little-known dilapidated ancient temple belonging to the Western Chalukyan or later called the Chalukyan era, located near the famous Unkal Lake. Though the 900-year-old temple lacks a *shikhara*, its sculptures and pillars are still considered noteworthy. The ancient temple has two lingas, one of which is a *chaturmukha* (four-faced) linga besides two Nandi statues at the entrance.

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→ GETTING THERE

Air Hubballi Airport is connected to Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Jindal Vidyanagar and Tirupati by SpiceJet and Star Air

Rail Hubballi Railway Station is connected to Bengaluru, Mumbai, Goa, Puducherry, Howrah etc by Rani Chennamma Express, Sharavati Express, Vishwamanava Express, HariPriya Express, Hubli-Londa-Hazrat Nizamuddin-Goa Link Express etc. Jan Shatabdi trains ply between Hubballi and Bengaluru daily.

Road Hubballi is connected to Bengaluru (NH48) (410 km/7 hrs). Taxi ₹10-15/km **Bus** KSRTC's Rajahamsa Executive (₹481-581), Airavat Club Class ₹848, Airavat Gold Class (₹743-858), Non Ac Sleeper ₹730, AC Sleeper ₹913. Plans are afoot for a bus rapid-transit system to improve connectivity between Hubballi-Dharwad.

DHARWAD

Bendre Bhavan

One of the most significant icons of Dharwad's literary heritage and the Navodaya or renaissance movement in Kannada, is poet laureate Dattatreya Ramachandra Bendre, more popular as Da Ra Bendre. The Jnanpith awardee is synonymous with Dharwad and his works celebrate the beauty, simplicity and spirit of his beloved hometown. His lucid poems and plays were often penned in the calm surroundings of Sadhanakeri, Attikola, Mugad and Kelgeri and continue to inspire generations of people. Until his death in 1981, Bendre lived in his lovely old ochre-hued home 'Shri Matha' at Sadhanakeri. In the garden is a small memorial with a bust of Bendre and the poems he had written for his wife. Next door is Bendre Bhavan, a museum with a library showcasing numerous portraits and photographs of him and extracts of his timeless poetry.

Sadhanakeri Park

Set a few metres from Da Ra Bendre's Memorial is a beautiful lakeside park that has remained one of Dharwad's famous landmarks to this date. One of the seven surviving lakes in the city, the lush park is a haunt for walkers, writers and families seeking some moments of inspiration or relaxation. The exciting water show with laser lights is a big attraction, especially for children, besides the numerous sculptures and art installations in the park.



Dharwad Bendre Bhavan, dedicated to Kannada literateur DR Bendre

Gangubai Hangal Birthplace & Memorial Musical Museum

'Gangothri', the erstwhile home of Dr Gangubai Hangal, the doyenne of Hindustani classical music was converted into a museum showcasing her life and legacy and contribution to music. She won several honours and prestigious national awards including the Padma Bhushan and Padma Vibhushan. With photographs, info panels and memorabilia and musical instruments in different rooms, the humble home in Shukravaradapete in Dharwad attracts several tourists who come to pay homage to one of India's finest musical gems, who performed well into her nineties.

Mallikarjun Mansur Memorial

Mallikarjun Mansur, the famous Indian classical singer who excelled

in the *khyal* style was born in Mansur, 5km from Dharwad. He received all three national Padma awards and the Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowship for his highly valuable contribution to music. 'Mrutyunjaya', his residence in Dharwad has been converted into a unique museum under the Dr. Mallikarjun Mansur National Memorial Trust. This Trust also organises an annual National Concert on September 12-13th with musical performances at the museum to mark his death anniversary and also presents three awards on December 31st to commemorate his birth anniversary.

Basel Mission Church

Set on Station Road and established by the Basel Missionary Society in 1844 is the oldest church of Dharwad. Also called the Hebich Memorial Church, the lovely white heritage

building is simple and elegant with Gothic arched windows and beautiful stained glass.

Dharwad Adventure Base

Just 7km from town, the new water theme park is a 10 min drive from Dharwad that provides a dash of fun and adrenalin for visitors. Set in a 27-acre mango orchard, the activity centre is partially complete, and ideal for a day trip dedicated to dry and wet games, cable cycling, zip lining, fun rides etc. with food and refreshments thrown in.

♦ **Tickets** Weekdays/Weekends Adult ₹650/700, Child ₹500/550 **Timings** 11am-6pm Cell 09341841567, 08792846238

dharwadadventurebase.com

Sauji cuisine



WHERE TO EAT

Eat a traditional veg meal of *jolada roti*, *hesarukalu palya* (green gram curry), *yenne badnekayi* (brinjal curry) and *puadis* (powders) at prominent Lingayat eateries like Basappa Khanavali in Dharwad. For non-veg fare, try *Sauji* cuisine at Hotel Milan Savaji at Jubilee Circle; for biryani its Niyaz Restaurant on PB Road. Don't miss Dharwad's signature sweet—Dharwad Peda, available at Thakur Pedha. In Hubballi, vegetarians will love Basaveshwara Khanavali; for Jain thalis its The Sigdi and Rasoi. Plunge into Durgada Bail, the local 'eat street'.

WHERE TO STAY

Being a bustling hub of commerce and education, there are numerous hotels and lodges in Hubballi-Dharwad, easily accessible from the airport and railway station.

Kyriad Prestige (Tel: 0836-6616661; Cell: 08884455627; Tariff: ₹3,500-6,000 + breakfast; TE) near Nekar Bhawan, Opp KH Patil PU College, Unkal Cross Hosur Service Road is managed by Citrus; this elegant place offers 62 fresh clean rooms; 3 F&B options including multi-cuisine restaurant Tangelo, gym, free wi-fi and temperature-controlled rooftop infinity pool.

Clark's Inn Airport Hotel (Tel: 2232675; Cell: 09902276113; Tariff: ₹5,000-7,500 + breakfast; TE) on Gokul Road is a decent option with



Interiors of a traditional Dharwad home, with wooden pillars

52 rooms, poolside lawn, free wi-fi, gym, steam and sauna, a multi-cuisine restaurant, a bar, and patisserie serving chocolates, cakes and pastries. **Cotton County Resort** (Tel: 2335799/899; Cell: 09243264099; Tariff: ₹2,000-4,500 +breakfast; TE) opposite Hubballi Airport and managed by Verda, is a pleasant place filled with greenery and offers 45 comfortable executive, deluxe AC rooms and AC cottage room with amenities like pool, free wi-fi and restaurant. The **Ocean Pearl Resort & Spa** Tel: 2226600; Cell: 08197666333; Tariff: ₹5,000-7,499; TE) on the Hubballi-Dharwad Highway, Rayapur, is a plush resort with 28 rooms and 2 cottages with private balconies presenting pool or garden views. Shraman Veg restaurant offers Marwari thalis, Coral multi-cuisine restaurant serves fresh and

delectable seafood, North Indian, Mughlai and local dishes are aplenty here. The in-house Spa offers relaxing Ayurvedic and Western therapies.

DHARWAD

In Dharwad **Hotel Dwarawata – The Door Town Hotel** (Tel:0836-2790999 Cell: 09108986362; Tariff: ₹3,500-5,500) is a decent option with 41 rooms, a restaurant, bar and coffee shop. Another option is **Mayur Aaditya Resort** (Tel: 2461701; Cell: 07090422999; Tariff: ₹6,200-9,600 + breakfast; TE) with 48 rooms, a restaurant, bar, swimming pool, gym, and travel desk.

AROUNDS

Agadi Thota (25km)

Located 25km from Hubballi city and 30km from Haveri, Agadi Thota



A statue of Kittur Rani Chennamma, who fought valiantly against the British

is a rustic themed daytrip venue for people of all ages. Set in a farmhouse, the place offers great traditional North Karnataka food (breakfast, lunch and evening snacks like girmitt bhaji) with activities like camel, tonga and bullock cart rides, boating, games, pottery etc. **Entry fee** Weekdays/Weekends ₹450/₹550, includes food and games **Timings** 10.30am-6.00pm; Cell 08880096000 www.agadithota.com

Kittur (32km)

A historical principality founded in 1585, Kittur is associated with valiant queen Rani Chennamma (1778-1829) who fought the British. On the outskirts of town lie the remains of the queen's palace within a fort. During the armed rebellion against

the British East India Company, the British Commissioner St John Thackeray was killed in 1824. An obelisk was constructed to his memory in the British cemetery in Dharwad. Later, Kittur Fort was stormed and Queen Chennamma was imprisoned in Bailhongal Jail where she died.

Saundatti (38km)

Once Sungandavarti, Savadavarti and Savadatti, Saundatti served as the capital of the Ratta dynasty, an offshoot of the Rashtrakutas, between 875-1230 until they moved their capital to Belgaum. Being great patrons of Jainism, the Rattas established several Jain basadis here. The historic town has an 18th century fort with impressive bastions

and an ancient Kalasiddheshwara Temple with beautiful painted carvings, besides old Chalukyan shrines dedicated to Puradeshwara and Ankeshwara. Nearly 5km from town, beyond the 10th century fort of Parashgad lies Yallammagudda hill with the temple of goddess Yellamma or Renuka Devi, once associated with the ancient practice of *devadasis*.

Attiveri Bird Sanctuary (43km)

A pristine sanctuary about 15km from Mundgod, is a birdwatcher's haven located around the Attiveri Reservoir. Presenting riverine and deciduous forests, the sanctuary covers 22.3 sq km and is a habitat for nearly 79 species of aquatic birds like Great and Little egrets, Black-headed Ibis, Grey Francolin, Eurasian spoonbill and other migratory species arriving from distant lands each year. Ideal time to visit is Nov-March; avoid heavy monsoon months May-August **Timings** 6am-6pm.

Belagavi/Belgaum (95km)

Historic Belgaum or Belagavi as it is called today dates back to the 12th century AD. Founded by the Ratta dynasty, it was referred as Venugrama or Venupura (city of bamboo) in early texts. Belgaum came under the Yadavas and had a tumultuous history with the Khiljis, Vijayanagara

kings and Deccan Sultanate vying for control. Today the cantonment city still has several vestiges of its glorious past. The ancient **Belgaum Fort** complex is surrounded by a moat and has centuries old mosques. The 12th century Jain temple at Kamalabasti in the fort area with its lotus like roof dedicated to Neminatha is noteworthy. At the city centre are the **Mahadev temple** and **Kapileshwara** temples dedicated to Lord Shiva. The pink stone architecture of **St. Mary's Church** with its gothic arches and stained glass windows is another remarkable landmark. Belgaum is famous for a milk-based sweet similar to *khova* called Belgaum *kunda* (best at Camp Purohit) and *maande* or *mandige*, a crepe-like sweet available at Krishnamurthi Saralaya at Konwal Gali. Try the Malai Bun and Irani Chai at Luna Tea Bar and Apollo Tea Bar, besides biryani at Niyaaaz Hotel. For a getaway from Belgaum, head to the picturesque horseshoe-shaped **Gokak Falls** on the Ghataprabha River. A 60km drive from Belagavi town, the falls plummet 52m (172ft) down a sandstone gorge and the sight is spectacular after the rains, especially Sep-March. Ancient Chalukyan monuments line the banks of the gorge. Gokak is known for its Gokak *kardantu*, a rich chewy





Photographs by ANURAG MALLICK

Gol Gumbaz, the mausoleum of king Mohammed Adil Shah

VIJAYAPURA

DOORWAY TO THE DECCAN

■ ANURAG MALLICK AND
PRIYA GANAPATHY

Long considered the doorway to the Deccan, Vijayapura's skyline is dominated by sooty domes and towering Islamic edifices under whose foundation lie the ruins of a forgotten city. Legend has it that Bijapur was once Vijayapura (and recently reverted to its old name). Referred to as 'Vidyanagari', 'Dakshina Varanasi' or Benares of the South in ancient times, 'The City of Victory' prospered under the Kalyani Chalukyas in 10th-11th centuries. An inscription on the wall of Ibrahim Rauza refers to the city as 'Vidyaapur',

the 'city of learning'. Oddly, the next chapter in Bijapur's story was scripted in far-flung Turkey. After Murad II, the Ottoman Emperor died, there was a war of succession. Historians suggest that the crown prince executed all other sons but Yusuf Adil Shah was smuggled to Persia as a slave and landed in the court of Bidar Sultanate. His bravery gained the Sultan's favor and he was appointed the Governor of Bijapur. With the breakup of the Bahmani state in 1482, Yusuf Adil Shah established an independent sultanate. He built the Citadel or Arkilla and the Faroukh Mahal. Being a man of culture, he invited poets and artisans,

as Bijapur became the powerful capital of the Adil Shahi dynasty that ruled in 16th-17th centuries until it was conquered by the Mughals in the year 1686.

The contribution of the Adil Shahi kings to the architecture, painting, language, literature and music of Karnataka is significant. The synthesis of Hindu and Islamic cultures created marvellous examples of South Indian Islamic architecture. The Adil Shahis were known for tolerance towards Hindus and non-interference in their religious matters. They employed Hindus in high posts in accounts and administration, and maintained records in Marathi! Vijayapura became a cosmopolitan city that attracted scholars, artists, musicians and Sufi saints from Rome, Persia, Iraq and Turkey. The *mushaira* (poetic symposium) was born in the Vijayapura court and later traveled north. The Dakhani language, a mix of Persian-Arabic, Gujarati, Marathi and Kannada, developed into an independent spoken and literary language. It prospered under the Bahmani kings and was later known as Dakhan Urdu to distinguish it from the north Indian Urdu. Under the Adil Shahis many literary works were published in Dakhani including Ibrahim Adil Shah II's book of poems and music, *Kitab-e-Navras*. Under the patronage of Ibrahim II the Vijayapura school of painting too reached its zenith. We are lucky that Persian artists of the Adil Shahi court have left behind a wealth of miniature paintings, some of which

can be found in museums across Europe today.

Geographically, the district occupies a barren plain, sloping eastward from a string of feudatory Maratha states to the dominion of the Nizams. Situated on an open plain, Vijayapura had no natural defense. Therefore its fort and the gateways were built with extremely hard and strong materials. Ibrahim Adil Shah I who succeeded his father Ismail, fortified the city. Vijayapura

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→ FAST FACTS

When to Go September to February is the best time. Can be visited all year round

Tourist offices

- Dept Of Tourism, Govt of Karnataka
Deputy Director's Office 📍
Block 1, Tourist Plaza, Indi Road, Opp
Dr. BR Ambedkar Stadium, Vijayapura
Tel: 08352-250359
Cell: 09448149515
 - Tourist Information Officer 📍
Vijayapura
Cell: 08095658443 (TO)
 - District Tourism Consultant 📍
Vijayapura
Cell: 07353269510
 - KSTDC Tourist Office 📍🌐
Hotel Mayura Adil Shahi
Station Road, Vijayapura
Cell: 08970650031
www.kstdc.co
- STD code 08352**

has two forts — one encircling the entire town and another fortified citadel protecting the royal palace enclosure. With the loot from the sack of Hampi, Ali Adil Shah I launched ambitious building projects, constructing the Gagan Mahal, his own tomb Ali Roza, a large well Chand Bawdi and the Jami Masjid. With 50 mosques, 20 dargahs and as many palace complexes Vijayapura occupies a prominent place on the architectural map of India and is often hailed as the 'Agra of South India'. It is also home to the largest known medieval cannon in the world.

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

Vijayapura or Bijapur captures the imagination of every visitor with its

A side-eye view of the Gol Gumbaz



graceful minarets and stately mosques, its many *mahals* (halls and palaces), *bavdis* (tanks), gateways and scattered ruins steeped in history. A two-day stay is advised to do justice to the many intricate monuments in the city of Vijayapura.

Gol Gumbaz

Dominating Vijayapura's skyline, Gol Gumbaz was built in 1626 by Mohammed Adil Shah and styled on a seven-storeyed mosque in Arabia. From its summit, a muezzin would give the call for *azaan* (prayer), hence it was known as 'Bol' Gumbaz. Over the years, it got corrupted to Gol Gumbaz, because of the round dome. On entering the compound, the Nagar Naubat Khana, a gateway like structure is seen; this was the perch from where the mighty *nagaar* (drums) would be sounded for the naubat (welcome) of the Adil Shahi sultan on his approach to enter the Gol Gumbaz.

Today it houses the office of the Archaeological Survey of India and the Archaeological Museum in the gatehouse has a collection of Chinese porcelain, paintings, armoury, miniatures and stone sculpture, including carvings from Chalukyan temples. Built on a single rock in 1626, the original site spread over 64 acres. The 210 ft high stone and masonry structure is made of black Vijayapura granite capped by a brick dome. With an internal diameter of 124 ft, it is the fourth largest dome in the world and the second largest unsupported dome after St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. In the centre of the



The majestic Gol Gumbaz

hall set on a plinth, are the gravestones of the seventh sultan Mohammed Adil Shah, his wife, daughter, grandson and favourite courtesan, Rambha.

The Whispering Gallery is an acoustic and architectural wonder. Not only is every sound audible, the acoustics ensured that sentries posted at the archways could overhear the slightest whisper. The echo of a loud clap can resound between seven to twelve times, depending on the prevailing noise levels. Back in the day, it was a venue for musical and dance performances. Seven storeys with 17 clunky medieval steps in each lead to a gallery outside that provides superb views of the city. The mosque on the left was where the Sultan spent time to offer his daily prayers.

◆ **Entry fee** ₹25 (Indians), ₹300 (foreigners) **Timings** 6am-5.30pm

Jami Masjid

Built by Ali Adil Shah I (1557-80) out of the spoils of the 1565 Talikote war against Vijayanagara, the magnificent mosque is regarded as the jewel of Adil Shahi architecture. Designed for the increasing population of the city, it was set in a sprawling ground covering 1,16,300 sq ft with graceful arches, aisles, halls and a large onion dome. The main section to the west has nine huge arches with decorative motifs on their apexes in a semicircle, resembling a flower bud. Despite its apparent perfection, this imposing mosque is incomplete as it lacks two minarets. Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb added a sprawling prayer hall divided into 45 compartments to house over

2,000 worshippers. What makes the masjid remarkable is its fine Islamic calligraphy as verses of the Quran are beautifully inscribed in gold. A heavy curtain hangs over the beautiful *mihrab*, an arched niche 7 m high and 6 m wide.

◆ **Entry Free Timings** 8am-5.30pm

Ibrahim Roza

A palatial mosque and tomb complex set in a square enclosure on a single slab of bedrock, Ibrahim Roza is said to have been the inspiration behind the Taj Mahal in Agra. Constructed by Persian architects under Ibrahim Adil Shah (1580-1627), it houses his tomb and those of his family. Approachable by a path laid out through a beautifully manicured

rauza (literally 'garden'), the monument is noted for its striking symmetry, elaborately decorated walls, slender minarets and cornices. The mausoleum stands to the left and the prayer hall to the right. These twin edifices each with a lofty tower are ornamented with four graceful *minars*. The carved panels are decorated with crosses, lotuses, wheels and calligraphic inscriptions, reflecting the religious tolerance of the Adil Shahi dynasty. Two stone chains, each carved from a single rock hang from the sides of the prayer hall. Every door, made of teak wood and re-enforced with metal, is unique. The arches in the hallway surrounding the inner perimeter of the mausoleum are superbly crafted while the façade has stunning artwork in stone, including a map to the basement, which lies under the mausoleum.

◆ **Entry fees** Indians ₹25, Foreigners ₹300 **Timings** 6am-5.30pm

Ark Killa/Bijapur Fort

Vijayapura was the only one of the splinter Bahmani kingdoms to have two forts. One citadel Ark Killa surrounded the palace buildings and the other enclosed the city, remnants of which can still be seen. Bijapur Fort was built by Adil Shah in 1503-04 and has four main gates and several secondary gates. The fort walls measured 11 km in length and were as wide as 6 m in some parts. Its height ranged from 30 to 50 ft and whole structure was strengthened with ninety-six massive bastions of various designs. In addition there are



The Ibrahim Roza tomb complex, where Ibrahim Adil Shah II is buried

ten others at the various gateways. A curtained wall about 10 ft. high ran from bastion to bastion. The whole fort was surrounded by a deep moat spanning 30-40ft in width.

Malik-e-Maidan Cannon

Straddling the fort walls on the Buruz or Lion Tower bastion is Malik-e-Maidan or Lord of the Plateau. Reputedly the largest medieval cannon in the world and the second largest in India, it was built on the orders of Burhan Nizam Shah I for his son-in-law Adil Shah. Fourteen feet long and weighing 55 tonnes, the cannon was forged out of gunmetal in Ahmednagar. It took 400 bullocks, 10 elephants and 100 people to drag it to its present location and part of the fort wall had to be torn down to accommodate it!

The muzzle is shaped like a lion whose jaws are poised to devour an elephant. The cannon used 600 kg of gunpowder in one go and pellets that weighed 50 kg each. About 10 gunners were required to set it off and they had to jump into a tank of water to avoid going deaf. It was used in the Talikota war of 1565, when the splinter Bahmani states joined forces to defeat Ramraya. Always cool to touch even under the hot sun, the cannon emits a soft tinkle when tapped gently! Locals perpetuate the myth that if one touches the cannon and make a wish it will come true!

◆ **Entry Free Timings** 8am-5.30pm

Bara Kamaan

Located northwest of the citadel, Bara Kamaan was the most ambitious

Malik-e-Maidan cannon; hallways of the tomb



project of Ali Adil Shah II. Envisioned as a 12-storeyed structure with 12 arches on each level, Ali's tomb would have surpassed the Gol Gumbaz. However, it remains a symbol of his unfulfilled dreams as construction came to a halt with the sultan's death and the tomb was left incomplete thanks to the indifference of his successors. Also known as Ali Roza, the big roofless structure stands on a raised 215 feet (66 m) square

platform with only two levels of incomplete yet massive arches in dark basalt. Looking at its scale, one can only marvel at the architectural audacity of the sultan. In the centre of the elevated platform, Ali is laid to rest beside his queens and eleven other ladies of the Zenana.

Jod Gumbaz

As the name suggests, the Jod Gumbaz are twin domes built in 1687 on an elevation by Aurangzeb during the era of Ali Adil Shah II. They enshrine the tombs of two traitors Khan Mohammad and Khawas Khan, a father-son duo who helped the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb defeat Sikandar, the young Adil Shahi ruler. It was also known as Abdul Razak Dargah.

◆ **Entry Free Timings** 8.00 am-5.30pm

Asar Mahal

Earlier called Adalat Mahal, Asar Mahal was built in 1646 by Sultan Muhammad Shah as a hall of justice. There is a square tank in front and the walls and ceilings of the gilded hall are covered in paintings of landscapes and various designs. Emperor Aurangzeb had these whitewashed but were later restored.

◆ **Entry Free Timings** 8.00 am-5.30pm

Haider Burj or Upari Burj

This 80 ft high Upari Burj or 'upper watchtower' was commissioned by Ibrahim Adil Shah II in 1584 and built by his military chief Haider



Bara Kamaan, an extremely ambitious tomb project that was left unfinished

Khan, after whom it is named. The strategically located bastion affords good views over the city.

Anand Mahal

West of Gagan Mahal, Ibrahim Adil Shah II built this two-storeyed palace in 1589 as a performance space exclusively for music and dance. The ornamental roof has fine stucco work with an interesting open front platform, accessed by two flights of steps on either side. Formerly, a general assembly area, it is presently being used as government offices.

Taj Bawadi

Built in 1620 by Ibrahim Adil Shah II in memory of his wife Taj Sultana, Taj Bawadi is a 223 ft square well. Beautifully arched rooms overlooking

the 52 ft deep tank made it an ideal resting spot in its time; today the water is dirty and full of garbage.

Navraspur

Around 7km from town on Athani road, Navraspur was the cultural seat of the Adil Shahi dynasty. Musical performances by artists of the Adil Shahi period were held in the Sangeet Mahal and the tradition continues even today. The Navraspur Festival in August is a 4-day music and dance extravaganza.

Other Monuments

The other historic structures of Vijayapura include **Sat Manzil** (a seven-storied palace), **Mehtar Mahal** (a palace built by sweepers), **Aras Mahal** (Ali II's pleasure resort), **Chini**

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→ GETTING THERE

Air Nearest Airports: Hubballi (200km/5hr) and Belgaum (220km/5hr). Air India, Indigo etc flights from both the airports connect Vijayapura to major cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad etc. Taxi's charge ₹8-10/km

Rail Vijayapura railway station, is well connected to major cities like Mumbai, Secunderabad, Hyderabad, Solapur, Varanasi, Raichur etc. Important trains include LTT Hubli Exp, Solapur Express, HYB BJP PSGR etc. You can catch a rickshaw/₹10 pp or horse cart/ ₹70-100 to the downtown area 2km away

Road Vijayapura is connected to major cities by NH13. The 530km journey from Bengaluru takes 9-10hrs. Taxis charge ₹8-10/km **Bus** Bengaluru to Vijayapura overnight bus fares begin at ₹500 approx to 1200 from Majestic bus stand ; from Hubballi to Vijayapura fare is ₹210; from Belgaum its ₹220. *Check out redbus.in*

Mahal or Faroukh Mahal (lofty durbar hall built by Yusuf Adil Shah), **Jal Manzil** (a water pavilion), **Chota Asar** (with finest stucco ornamentation), **Bukhari Masjid** (built by Chand Bibi for a moulvi), **Afzal Khan's Cenotaph** and **Nauzer Elavia** (century-old mansion).

SHOPPING

Besides hand-woven Ilkal saris, Vijayapura is famous for grapes and pomegranate (exported to Europe), raisins and groundnut. The Umadi Kirana Shop at Lal Bahadur Shastri Market is a good place to buy dry fruits, spices and *shenga* (groundnut) products. Make sure to pick some

Korti Kolhar matka curd; Bijapur Oota



delicious *shenga* chutney powder and sweet *shenga holige* and *chikki*.

WHERE TO EAT

Tiny eateries dish out the delicious *Bijapur oota*, a signature vegetarian *thali* that offers *jola* (jowar/sorghum) or *sajji* (bajra) roti, vegetable or soppu palya (greens), pulses, mosaru (curd) and the trademark *Shinga* (also *shenga* or groundnut) chutney with sprigs of heirloom *methi* (fenugreek), onion and cucumber. For multi-cuisine, try Karhaai and The Sigdi.

WHERE TO STAY

Shashinag Clarks Inn (Tel: 08352-260344, 260444; Cell: 08151869044, 07568258599; Tariff: ₹2,000-5,000; TE) on the Solapur Bypass Road is a 3-star property features 30 rooms, restaurants, a coffee shop, lounge/bar, garden, swimming pool, gym and a spa. **KSTDC's Mayura Adil Shahi Annexe** (Tel: 250401; Cell: 08970650031; Tariff: ₹1,680) on Station Road, near Ambedkar Stadium, has four clean rooms, separate veg and non-veg restaurants and Internet service in the lobby only. The **Hotel Basava Residency** (Tel: 243777; Cell: 091525499; Tariff: ₹2,900-5,200; TE) also on Station Road, near Gol Gumbaz, has 28 rooms with complimentary breakfast. Another option on Station Road is **Hotel Kanishka International** (Tel: 223788/789, 255506; Tariff: ₹ 2,500; TE) with 26 well-appointed rooms, a restaurant and Internet service. **Hotel Sagar Deluxe** (Tel: 251121,



Bridge over the Almatti Dam, which aids both irrigation and recreation

259234/36; Cell: 08660288008; Tariff: ₹ 1,000) near Basaveshwara Chowk has 46 rooms and a restaurant. **The Sabala Heritage Home** (Cell: 09448118204; Tariff: 1,600-4,000 + breakfast) on the Sabala Campus, NH 13, near Ganesh Nagar, Vijayapura Bypass, offers 7 AC/ 4 non-AC rooms, veg cuisine (non-veg on request), Internet, Banjara Village visit and cultural activities. It also runs a NGO called Sabala for empowerment of local women, on the city outskirts.

AROUNDS

Almatti Dam (60 km)

The main reservoir of the Upper Krishna Project (UKP), Almatti dam

is located on the right toe of the river. Though the water is diverted for irrigation purposes, it is also plays host to leisure activities like boating and is a popular tourist spot. As with most dams, it has a nicely laid out garden popular with locals. Make a pit stop at Korti-Kolhar for fresh *matka dahi*, served with *shenga pudu* (spicy powder) and *avalakki* (beaten rice) besides fresh fish from the dam served at highway eateries.

Bilgi (63 km)

Around 25 km north of Bagalkot, Bilgi has several monuments of the Kalyana Chalukyas besides the Dargah of Hazrat Hassan, which draws huge crowds during Muharram. South of town is the old Shiva temple



The temple at Kudalasangama overlooks a sacred confluence

of Siddeshwara, surrounded by hillocks with a beautiful *kalyani* (tank). An inscription dating to 1695-96 on the temple steps mentions that Khanderao Timmaji a subordinate of Vizier Haidar Khan built the shrine's eastern doorway. In the northern part of town is Aretina Bhavi, literally 'six-bullock well' in Kannada, a beautiful stone *kalyani*. The ruined Shiva shrine inside the well is not worshipped as the *linga* is broken. The walls bear Kannada, Marathi and Persian inscriptions citing that the well was built by Visajipanta, in 1708 AD.

Mudhol (82 km)

Located on the scenic left bank of the Ghataprabha river, Mudhol was once Muduvolal or 'Lovely Town.' It is the birthplace of famous Kannada poet Ranna. The underground Shiva

and Kamaleshwar temples, the Mahavir basadi and the Brahmagaddi Veerashaiva Math are the main attractions here. Syed Peer Dargah attracts huge crowds during the annual *urs*. The town's other highlights include the Mudhol hound — a special breed of hunting and guard dog known for their hardy nature, that was bred exclusively by the Maratha Ghorpade family who ruled the area, and its famous grindstones and *tulsi katte* or holy basil pedestals. Situated about 20 km from Mudhol, Lokapura has several Rashtrakuta temples dedicated to Lokeshwara, Ramalingeshwara and Durgadevi.

Kudalasangama (85 km)

About 20 km north of Hungund, the 12th century Sangameshwara or Sangamanatha temple, built in

Chalukyan style overlooks the sacred confluence of the Malaprabha, Ghataprabha and Krishna rivers. In 12th century, Jathaveda Muni established a learning centre here where the poet and social reformer Basavana or Basaveshvara spent his childhood and gained education. He founded the Lingayat sect, composed several *vachanas* and on returning from Kalyana, merged with the Shiva *linga* here. His underwater *samadhi* Aikya Mantapa is located at the exact *sangama* (confluence) and is marked by a stone *mantapa* (or pavilion) with a *linga*. After the area was flooded because of the damming of the river, it was converted into a step-well approachable via a connecting bridge from the Sangameshwara Temple. The 200 ft high Basava Gopura houses the Basava International Centre and the *ashram* has a museum of antiquities. Kudalasangama has developed into an important pilgrim centre for Lingayats; many visitors also offer their respects at Basavana Bagewadi, the saint's birthplace.

Bagalkot (90 km)

According to legend, Bagalkot town is believed to have been granted to the *Vajantries* (village orchestra) of Lord Ravana. In Chalukyan inscriptions which have survived the



Panka Masjid

march of time, it is referred to as Bagadage. It appears that one of the Vijayapura kings decided to present the town to his daughter as 'bangle' or 'ornament money'; consequently the place came to be called *Bagdikot*, which over time took on the corrupt form of 'Bagilakote' or 'Bagalkot' as we know it today. Noteworthy shrines include Shri Bhavani, Panduranga, Kotalasha, Raghavendraswamy Matha and Motagi Basaveshwara, besides a Jain *basadi* of Parshwanatha, a Virakta *matha* and beautiful mosques like Panka Masjid. ■

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Photographs by ANURAG MALLICK

KALABURAGI

BASTION OF THE BAHMANIS

■ ANURAG MALLICK AND
PRIYA GANAPATHY

Kalaburagi (meaning ‘stone heap’ in Kannada) was formerly Gulbarga, a Persian moniker that described it as ‘a city of flowers and gardens’. It retells the ultimate rags-to-riches story of Zafar Khan, a poor labourer nominated by Gangu, his Brahmin master in Delhi to the service of Muhammad Bin Tughlaq. Impressing the Sultan with his zeal and honesty, Zafar became known as Hassan Gangu or Gangu ‘Bahmani’ after his Brahmin

(*bahman*) patron. He distinguished himself in battle and rose through the ranks to become the governor of Daulatabad province. When the nobles of Deccan rebelled against Tughlaq, they captured the fort of Daulatabad and propped up Afghan noble Ismail Mukh as the Sultan of the Deccan under the title Nasiruddin Shah. Being old and unable to rule, Ismail handed over authority to Hassan Gangu, who assumed the name Alauddin Bahman Shah, chose Kalaburagi as his capital (renaming it Ahsanabad) and laid the foundation of the Bahmani kingdom in 1347.

Gulbarga Fort, a military masterpiece

Bahman Shah expanded his kingdom by conquering Bidar, Malkhed, Dabhol, Goa, Kolhapur and parts of Telangana. After his death in 1358, his eldest son Muhammad Shah I seized the fertile Raichur Doab from the Vijayanagara kingdom and Golkonda from the Raja of Warangal. Kalaburagi prospered and the riches spawned art and architecture, scholars received royal patronage and Kalaburagi emerged as a centre of learning. When Feroze Shah invited Sufi saint Khwaja Bande Nawaz Gesu Daraz, the place flourished into an educational and spiritual centre. With a legacy such as the

library at Khwaja Bande Nawaz Dargah which houses 10,000 books in Urdu, Persian and Arabic, perhaps education was ingrained in Kalaburagi’s ethos. It was only natural for it to become the educational hub it is today.

A unique synthesis of several cultures and many tongues, the historic fortified city brims with citadels, palaces, mosques, stately tombs and bazaars. The Bala Hisar (citadel within a citadel) here is one-of-a-kind and the magnificent Jamia or Jumma Masjid is comparable to the Cordoba mosque in Spain. The dargah of Khwaja Bande Nawaz continues to be one of the holiest Islamic shrines in South India, with Persian friezes, inscriptions and a canopy of mother-of-pearl inlaid with mirrors. There is a whiff of Arabia here as fantastic stories abound about paupers turning into princes, golden oil lamps that could

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→ FAST FACTS

When to Go Best in winter, between October and January

Tourist office

● Dept of Tourism, Govt of Karnataka 📍
No 49, 2nd Floor, Khanija Bhavan
Race Course Road, Bengaluru
Tel: 080-22352828

🌐 karnatakaturism.org

STD codes 08472 (Kalaburagi), 080 (Bengaluru)

fly, inscriptions that cast a spell and neem leaves that taste sweet if your wish were to come true.

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

Gulbarga Fort

West of the city and protected by a wide moat are the desolate ruins of a once powerful fort. Originally built by Raja Gulchand and later fortified

by Alauddin Bahman, the fort contains ruins of mosques, temples, stables, ammunition dump, 15 towers, 26 cannons and several beautiful courtyards. The highlight, Bara Gaz Top is regarded as one of the largest cannons in the world and is 29 ft long. With no natural defence like a hilly site or a river nearby, the Bahmanis instead endowed Gulbarga Fort with Bala Hissar, a massive rectangular keep, or citadel within a citadel. This important piece of military architecture was inspired by the Crusades and is one of the few examples found in India. The fort lies in ruins with wild shrubs growing in the moats. To its rear is the 14th century Bazaar Street, lined with small chambers now converted into dwellings. From here, head down to the derelict tombs of the early Bahmani sultans. Feroze Shah Bahmani, who died in 1422, is buried here in the largest and most elaborate of all mausoleums.

Jamia Masjid

Built in 1367, the large Jamia Masjid commemorates Kalaburagi's status as the Bahmani capital. Designed by Rafi, a Moorish architect from Kwajwin in northern Persia, its elegant domes and arched columns are reminiscent of the great mosque of Cordoba in Spain. The fact that it does not have an open courtyard makes this 38,000 sq ft mosque rather unique in India. A huge dome covers the west bay, with four medium-sized ones at the corners and 63 smaller ones arranged in rows

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→ GETTING THERE

Air Nearest airport: Rajiv Gandhi International Airport, Hyderabad (230km/5½hrs), is well connected to metros and cities across India. Taxi costs ₹10-14/km

Rail Gulbarga Railway Station is connected to Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Mumbai by the Pune-Hyderabad Express, Udyan Express, Konark Express, Karnataka Express, Kalaburagi (Kalaburagi)-Hyderabad passenger train

Road Kalaburagi is connected by highways with Hyderabad (5½hrs) and Bengaluru; the latter is a 13-hr long drive which is not too smooth **Bus** There's a deluxe bus overnighter from Bengaluru and deluxe and ST buses through the day from Hyderabad. Also available from Hyderabad's main bus stand are KSRTC's Rajhamsa night bus service (5½hrs/ ₹328), Airavat Gold (3.45hrs/ ₹491) and Non-AC seater (6hrs/ ₹233)



Khwaja Bande Nawaz Dargah, one of South India's holiest Muslim shrines

filling the inner area. The imposing tall arch in the main northern gateway is also noteworthy.

Shah Bazaar Mosque

The oldest mosque in Kalaburagi, it is one of the first in India to reflect Timurid architectural influences of the multi-bay prayer hall, like Isfahan, seen in a more refined form at the Jamia Masjid. Located north of the fort, the 14th century mosque has a domed entrance chamber leading to a courtyard with a prayer hall beyond. The dargah of Sufi saint Sheikh Sirajuddin Junaidi, the simple 14th century tomb, has arcaded recesses and a flattened dome. In the 16th century, Yusuf Adil Khan added



the impressive gateway flanked by tall minarets. In the Junaidi dargah is a tree that grew out of Khwaja Gesu Daraz's *miswaq* (twig of a tree used as a toothbrush). The tree overshadows the courtyard and visitors receive a twig as blessing.

Khwaja Bande Nawaz Dargah

The tomb of Sufi saint Khwaja Syed Mohammad 'Bande Nawaz' (Comforter of the people) is one of South India's holiest Muslim shrines. Born in 1321, he became a disciple of Hazrat Khwaja Nasiruddin when he was fifteen. It is believed that once while carrying his spiritual guide on his shoulders, his long locks of hair got entangled in the palanquin but

he suffered the pain quietly, without stopping. Pleased by his dedication, his mentor conferred the title Gesu Daraz 'he with the long hair' on him. When Nasiruddin died in 1356, Khwaja Bande Nawaz was appointed the head of the Sufi order in India. After forty years in the north, Timur's sack of Delhi led him to the Deccan. On invitation of the Bahmani sultan, he settled in Kalaburagi, breathing his last in 1422. His treatises on Sufism, law and philosophy became instructional texts for students at his madrasa in Kalaburagi. Khwaja's tomb is encircled by tombs of his relatives. Men are permitted to enter the main tomb while women pray from outside. The canopy over his grave has designs in mother-of-pearl

A tomb in the Haft Gumbaz Complex



SHUTTERSTOCK

and the dome is lined with elaborate friezes. The mosaic mirrors reflect verses from the Quran and vibrant paintings. A gold plate stuck to the roof of Gesu Daraz's grandson's tomb is believed to be an oil lamp that miraculously overturned and wafted to the ceiling when a thief tried to grab it. The mausoleum opposite has fine ornamentation on the walls, with a lovely drape above the tomb. Story goes that the Khwaja had fathered many sons but wished for a daughter and it finally came true. Her grave lies nearby and a neem tree shades the tomb. It is believed that if one makes a wish and chews on a neem leaf from the tree, his/her wish would be granted if it tasted sweet. The dargah library houses 10,000 books in Urdu, Persian and Arabic. The 16th century mosque has sculpted brackets while the forecourt has a large ceremonial arch built in 17th century that is unusual. The dargah of Shah Kamal Mujarrad, another saint who lived in Kalaburagi, lies further south.

Chor Gumbad

Perched on an isolated hill west of town is Chor Gumbad, built as a tribute to Khwaja Gesu Daraz. It is believed that Ahmad Shah erected it to commemorate his victory over his brother, Firuz Shah after regaining the throne in 1422 with support of his spiritual adviser Gesu Daraz. The 30 m tall structure with a massive dome has unusual miniature corner *chhatris* and stucco work with leaf motifs on the ceiling. After it was abandoned, it became the haunt for



Sharana Basaveshwara Temple, which exemplifies Maratha-style architecture

robbers, hence the name Chor Gumbad (The Dome of Thieves). British political agent Philips Meadows Taylor, author of *Confessions of a Thug*, is believed to have camped here for a while.

Sharana Basaveshwara Temple

Set in the heart of town, the 19th century Shiva temple is built in Maratha style and named after 18th century social reformer Sharana Basaveshwara who spent much of his life in Kalaburagi. Legend has it that when the saint was on his way to Basavakalyan the region was in the grips of a severe famine and he halted at Farhatabad on the outskirts of Kalaburagi. Disturbed by the sight of starvation, he stayed back and

later moved to Kalaburagi to dedicate his life to the service of the people. The temple has a richly carved spire with an idol depicting the guru-shishya *parampara* (tradition) and showcases several relics of the saint who took *mahasamadhi* (consciously leaving one's body) here. A chariot festival is held in his honour near Gulbarga tank every year.

Other monuments

Also worth seeing are the tombs of **Sultan Hasan**, **Ghias-ud-din**, the fine **mausoleum of Feroze Shah** and family with its two low-slung domes, trellis windows and *kalashas* in each corner, the elaborately decorated **Langar-ki-Masjid**, the complex of seven royal tombs known as the

Haft Gumbaz on the outskirts of the city, the immaculate lawns of **Mahboob Gulshan** and Kalaburagi's many elegant mosques.

SHOPPING

Buy perfume in little glass vials from *ittar* sellers and books on religion and philosophy at bookstalls outside the dargah.

WHERE TO EAT

Kamath Restaurant and **Gajanan Khanavali** in the Supermarket are popular haunts; city hotels like **Hotel Pariwar** and **Sanman** have good vegetarian restaurants. **Hotel Chetak** at Humnabad Base is a small eatery serving fiery Sauji cuisine like mutton chops and *kaima unde* (meatballs). For spicy Maratha fare in a no-frills

Fiery Sauji meat curry



environment, try **Jagdamba Maratha Khanavali** and **Jai Bhavani Maratha Khanavali** also known as **Chaddi Hotel** (since the owner sported Maratha style shorts in the past). **Kababish**, **Nawaz** and **Zam Zam Café** dish out good biryani and chicken/mutton curries while **Zaiqa** in Khaja Colony near KVN Medical College serves *samoli* (shawarma sandwich or stuffed oblong bread). Near the dargah are some shops selling Kalyani biryani.

WHERE TO STAY

The popular **Hotel Citrus Gulbarga** (Tel: 08472-241919; Cell: 09606070807; Tariff: ₹4,000-6,500;TE) near the Gold Hub Mall, Opp KBN Hospital offers 25 rooms with complimentary breakfast. It has a restaurant, bar and provides Internet services. The **Hotel Golden Regency** (Tel: 266688; Cell: 09663535500; Tariff: ₹1,350-1,575) on Station Road, behind AK Asian Grand has 20 rooms with free breakfast, room services and Internet

Atharva Hotel (Tel: 277999, 243399 Cell: 09036141999; Tariff: ₹1,900-5,500 + breakfast; TE) located at Ram Mandir Circle, High Court Road offers 34 rooms, a veg restaurant and internet. The **Hotel Aditya** (Tel: 224040-41; Cell: 09740478140; Tariff: ₹1,600-4,900 + breakfast; TE) opposite the Public Garden on the Main Road offers 62 rooms with room service and Internet in the lobby. The **Hotel Heritage Inn** (Tel: 224093-94; Cell:



Colourful street snacks

09036235555; Tariff: ₹1,500-4,000 + breakfast; TE) near Khwaja Bande Navaz Dargah, on Temple Road has a choice of 43 rooms. For convenience sake, it has two restaurants, one veg and one non veg. The well-stocked bar is a popular hub. Also on offer are internet services, room service and TV.

For more, see Accommodation Listings on pages 438-439

AROUND KALABURAGI

Buddha Vihara (10 km)

A Buddhist temple complex 10km from the city on Sedam Road near Gulbarga University, the vihara blends architectural features of eminent Buddhist centers of Sanchi, Sarnath and Ajanta. The white stupa amid landscaped gardens is a serene spot best experienced in the evening. A meditation room is available for

dhyana (no talking permitted inside). Photography is not allowed beyond the main entrance arch. Timings: 9 am-1:30 pm, 4pm - 8pm

Martur (16 km)

The tiny village is known for an important inscription on a stone plaque at the Kalingeshwara Temple. Dated 1124 AD, it reveals the origins of the renowned author of *Mitakshara*, a law treatise written 10 centuries ago, followed in Indian courts even today! The legal commentary by great jurist Vijnaneshwara explains *Yagnvalkya Smruthi*, propounded by philosopher Yagnvalkya. Except for a few minor alterations, the laws in India relating to Hindu joint family, property rights, *stree dhana* (women property) and succession are still governed by *Mitakshara*. Discovered in 1932 by Prof PB Desai and deciphered by famous epigraphist Sitaram Jagirdar, the temple



Twin domes of the tomb of Afzal Khan, a loyal general to Adil Shah of Vijayapura

inscription mentions that the medieval jurist was in the court of Emperor Vikramaditya (1076-1126 AD). Born in Masemadu village in Bidar, Vijnaneshwara lived in Martur, where he wrote his *Mitakshara*. Also worth a look is the millennium-old baobab tree believed to have been brought from Africa by the Portuguese. Since the tree grew in the Lakshmi Temple, villagers call it *Lakshmi gida* or 'Lakshmi's plant'. The villagers don't touch the sacred tree for fear of enraging the goddess, which is why it has survived for centuries. The tree hints that Martur, an important place during the reign of Vikramaditya VI of the Kalyani Chalukyas, may have also been a major trade and business centre. The baobab is packed with medicinal values — the leaves heal wounds without leaving scars, burnt leaf

powder mixed in coconut oil is applied to boils and ulcers, tender leaves are used for treating fever.

Ganagapura (38 km)

Overlooking the sacred confluence of the Amreza and Bhima rivers is Ganagapura. A famous centre of Dattatreya worship, this pilgrim centre has the sacred *matha* of Shri Narasimha Saraswathi. Thousands come here all year round for a holy dip at the sacred confluence whose waters are believed to possess unique healing properties. A huge *jatra* (fair) is held here every February.

Malkhed (39 km)

Situated on the banks of river Kagini between Kalaburagi and Sedam, Malkhed was once Manyakhet, the capital of the Jain Rashtrakutas. The famous Jain centre has several Jain

antiquities, including the 9th century temple of Shri Malkhed Tirtha dedicated to Neminath. The temple pillars and walls are suffused with striking carvings. Malkhed is also famous for its two great personalities — Madhava saint Jaya Tirtha or Tikacharya and poet Pushpadanta who wrote during the reign of Rashtrakuta king Krishna II. As per Jain scriptures, Jaya Tirtha came to Malkhed to spend his final days near the *brindavana* of his spiritual master Akshobhya Tirtha and disappeared on the banks of the river Kagini.

Afzalpur (56 km)

Enroute from Vijayapura to Kalaburagi lies the small outpost of Afzalpur, built in memory of Afzal Khan, the *sipehsalar* (Commander in Chief) of Adil Shah of Vijayapura. Set in a garden, the twin domes of Afzal Khan's tomb and mosque see few tourists though locals offer *namaaz* here. The structures are topped with slender intricately carved minarets and are fine examples of intricate Islamic architecture.

Ghattaraga (70 km)

About 16 km south of Afzalpur is the centuries old Bhagyawanti Devi Temple. The tutelary deity of the Vijayanagara kings, the goddess is believed to have come via the

Tungabhadra and Krishna river and manifested as a pillar that was installed here. This temple is famous for its strange *sidi yata* ritual to appease the presiding deity. Local lore says that a saint who came here many years ago, prepared an *agnikunda* (fireplace) and danced on the fire. Inspired by his devotion, the villagers too started to worship the deity in this manner. The temple practices this ritual to this day.

Shorapur (110 km)

Also known as Surapur, this picturesque town lies on a ridge surrounded by hills. Scattered around are temples, palaces, mosques, *ashurkhanas* (mourning place) and an imposing fort. Shorapur was where Raja Venkatappa Naik rebelled against the British in 1857. Standing high above town to the north is Taylor's Manzil, the residence of British Political Agent Col. Philip Meadows Taylor and author of *Confessions of a Thug*. The once beautiful mansion with a manicured garden sadly stands as a poorly maintained government rest house on a bare plot of land today. The single storeyed mansion with a semicircular portico overlooks the former garden and town. The Gopalswamy temple draws many crowds, *jatra* on Janmashtami. ■

#Awesom Karnataka





Photographs by ANURAG MALLICK

BIDAR

CITY OF WHISPERING MONUMENTS

■ ANURAG MALLICK AND
PRIYA GANAPATHY

Perched like a crown on Karnataka's northeastern tip at 2,200 ft, Bidar stands on a plateau overlooking the picturesque Manjira river valley. Once covered in dense bamboo clusters, the place was called *Bidarooru* or 'town of bamboos', from *bidaroo* (bamboo) and *uru* (village). In ancient times, it was Bedadakota, the romantic haunt of the celebrated mythological pair Nala-Damayanti and Vidurapura,

believed to be the home of Vidura, in the Hindu epic *Mahabharata*. Between the 10th and the 13th centuries, it came under the Chalukyas, Yadavas and Kakatiyas. In 1322, Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq captured Bidar and left it under the charge of his officers and a garrison. Tughlaq's Sadah Amirs (revenue collectors) and military commanders rebelled against him and elected the old Ismail Mukh as their sultan at Daulatabad. After he abdicated, on August 3, 1347, Zafar Khan assumed the title of Alauddin Hasan Bahman Shah. While

Bidar Fort, built by a Bahmani ruler

Kalaburagi served as his capital, Bidar was made a *taraf* (province).

The town flourished as the provincial headquarters and in 1424, the ninth Bahmani ruler Ahmad Shah I shifted his capital to Bidar. He rebuilt the old Hindu fort and laid out beautiful palaces and gardens. Reputed Islamic scholar Mahmud Gawan came from Arabia to Bidar in 1453. Well versed in Persian and mathematics, he became tutor to Mahmud Shah III (1462–1482) and later his Prime Minister, looking after the administration for 30 years and constructing several monuments. According to historian

Ferishta, several foreign engineers and architects were employed in the construction of Bidar Fort.

Russian traveller Athanasius Nikitin (1470–1474) was so enamoured by the city that he adopted the name Yusuf Khurasani and lived here for four years, writing a vivid account of life during the Bahmani period. Bhai Sahib Singh, one of the Panj Pyare (five beloved ones), who offered to sacrifice their heads at Guru Gobind Singh's behest and were baptised as the first members of the Khalsa, was a barber who hailed from Bidar.

During his second *udasi* (holy journey) in 1510–1514, Guru Nanak visited Bidar while travelling from Golconda to Nanded and met Muslim saints Pir Jalaluddin and Yakoob Ali. A gurudwara stands at the spot where he created a fresh water stream.

For nearly a century, Bidar remained the Bahmani capital until



→ FAST FACTS

When to go Best from October to February

Tourist Office

- Office of the Assistant Director 📍 Department of Tourism Deputy Commissioner Office Bidar
- Tel: 08482-225262
- Cell: 08884336435 (DTC)

STD code 08482

the kingdom splintered into five independent Deccan sultanates in 1518. After the Bahmanis, their *viziers* the Baridis (1504–1619) continued to rule Bidar, which became the seat of the Barid Shahi dynasty. The Bijapur Sultanate took Bidar in 1619, which in turn was conquered by Mughal emperor Aurangzeb in 1656 and later the Nizams of Hyderabad. Enriched by various influences, art, craft and culture prospered here. Bidriware, a silver etching craft unique to the city, was patronised by its sultans and named after the place. There are over 90 monuments in and around Bidar, including 30 tombs that draw historians, offbeat travellers and lovers of architecture to this fascinating ‘City of Whispering Monuments’.

Solah Kumbh Mosque, built by the Bahamanis, and restored by Aurangzeb



SAIBAL DAS

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

The fort, *madrasa* and watchtower are in the heart of Bidar, while the royal tombs dot the red laterite countryside at Ashtur just outside town to the east. Jharna Narsimha lies nearby to the south while Guru Nanak Jhira is located in the north and Papnash temple in the northwest of town.

Moti Masjid

Located near Talghat Darwaza, Moti Masjid was built in 1694 out of black trapstone and is hence popularly known as Kali Masjid (Black Mosque). The vaulted ceiling has fine plaster decorations and another unique feature is the presence of a number of *khanqabs* (hospices) or Sufi dwellings, which are still in use.



This part of the fort, Rangeen Mahal, was designed by a Persian architect

Bidar Fort

Archaeological finds confirm the remains of a Hindu fort dating to 3rd century BCE, which was later used by the Chalukyas, Yadavas and Kakatiyas. In its present form, the 15th-century Bidar Fort encircling the town was built by Ahmad Shah Bahmani between 1426 and 1432. A series of seven imposing *darwazas* (gates) guarded the old city, which was surrounded by a 5.5 km-long wall and a triple moat built by Turkish mercenaries and designed along the lines of medieval European forts. The moat was once infested with crocodiles. Ahmad Wali Shah laid out magnificent gardens, fountains and water features. Most of the façade, moat and 37 bastions surmounted with cannons are intact. Enter from the southeast through the majestic **Sharza Darwaza**, called so because of

the sculpted basalt lions on the arched entrance. The parapet above has a band of coloured-tiles with a Naubat Khana (drum gallery) upstairs. The path zigzags to the domed **Gumbad Darwaza**—it’s said that 3,000 men could take up positions between the two gates to defend the formidable fort. The ingenious **Mandu Darwaza** has an entrance through an underground tunnel. **Rangeen Mahal**, built by second Barid Shahi ruler Ali Barid (1542-80) using a Persian architect features elaborately carved wooden pillars, Persian couplets engraved in encaustic tiles and exquisite mother-of-pearl inlay work. **Gagan Mahal** (Sky Palace) has two large courts and was built by the Bahmani kings in 14-15th century with later additions by the Barid Shahis. Near it are the **Shahi Matbakh** (Royal Kitchen) and **Shahi**

Hamam (Royal Bath), now converted into a museum housing a modest collection of 13th-century sculptures and weaponry. Further on is the **Zenana** with a 16-columned prayer hall built in 1423 by Qubli Sultani known as the **Solah Khamba Masjid**. Once the town's main mosque, it is the oldest Muslim building in Bidar and one of the largest mosques in India. Next to it is the double-storeyed **Tarkash Mahal**, built for the Sultan's Turkish queen and the royal harem. The walls have colourful tiles and stucco work while the upper rooms feature the trademark Barid Shahi motif of a chain and pendant. Don't miss the **Diwan-e-Aam** where the Takht-e-Firozi (Turquoise Throne)

Ashtur Bahmani tombs



once rested, the Takht Mahal, the Royal Pavilion and Hazar Kothri. Today, all that remains of it are the black basalt bases of carved pillars that once held up an ornate wood and mortar ceiling.

Madrasa of Mahmud Gawan

One look at the decorative white, yellow and green tiles on the minaret and the viewer is immediately transported to Isfahan. These tiles were indeed brought from Persia and the *madrasa* was styled on West Asian architecture. As prime minister of the Bahmani kingdom, Mahmud Gawan oversaw the construction of several buildings, including his legendary *madrasa* in 1472. Familiar with renowned colleges at Samarkand and Khorasan, Gawan's *madrasa* too was a multi-disciplinary university. An imposing three-story building with 100 ft-tall minarets in four corners, the large courtyard was surrounded by cubicles where students could stay. It had large lecture halls, a prayer hall, mosque and a library housing 3,000 rare volumes. After Gawan was wrongly executed on charges of treason, the *madrasa* suffered greatly after his death, though the building stood firm for two centuries. Following the capture of Bidar by Aurangzeb in late 17th century, the buildings served as a powder magazine and barracks for his cavalry. Unfortunately, a huge arsenal explosion destroyed much of the edifice, its rooms and three minarets. Only a few cubicles, a lone minaret and the adjacent mosque beautified by the elegant



Madrasa of Mahmud Gawan, with its visibly Persian design influence

calligraphy featured on its tiles, which remain intact to this day.

Chaubara

Right in the heart of Bidar stands Chaubara, a circular watchtower. Strategic to the city's defense, it offered a great vantage on all sides and currently serves the same purpose as a traffic roundabout. The flight of 80 steps through a winding staircase leading to the top of the tower was sealed off recently.

Chaukhandi

West of the Ashtur necropolis on a hillock stands Chaukhandi, an octagonal mausoleum of Hazrat Shah Khalilullah Rahmat Ali Kirmani Baba, a Shia saint and spiritual advisor to the Bahmani rulers. Many of his followers have been buried alongside. This unusual two-storeyed

building is approached by a wide flight of stairs. The high crenellated parapet has corner finials. Each face has two tiers of arched recesses with a rectangular opening at the centre. The 600-yr-old mausoleum is a popular pilgrim spot for those seeking a cure for illnesses.

Ashtur Bahmani tombs

A 3 km-winding drive to Ashtur, a small village east of Bidar leads you to the royal tombs erected by Bahmani kings from 1436 to 1535. Known for their secular outlook and empathy towards their predominantly Hindu subjects, it is significant that the Bahmani tombs were located in the outskirts of the city unlike those of the Barid Shahi rulers.

The onion-domed tombs of the Bahmani kings and their wives are square-shaped with arched arcades

all around. The interiors have coloured and gilded paintings of great beauty on the ceilings, while the exteriors have bulbous domes, stone carvings and coloured tiles. The two most impressive are those of the ninth and tenth Bahmani rulers, Ahmad Shah I and Allauddin Shah II. The interior of Ahmad Shah I's tomb is embellished with exquisite gilded paintings. Sadly, most of the murals have been destroyed by the leaking roof and

blackened by the soot of candles and oil lamps lit by devotees who consider him a Sufi saint. Nearby, is his son Allauddin Shah II's tomb with unique blackstone edgings.

The most unusual tomb is that of a later ruler, the Sultan Humayun, which got split in half by lightning. In order to lessen the load on the dome of his tomb, spongy bricks that float in water were used, making it an innovation in construction.

Barid Shahi tombs

Set in a sprawling landscaped garden called Barid Shahi Park stand the tombs of the Barid Shahi dynasty. Qasim Barid (1481-1504), originally a Turkish slave of Bahmani Sultan Mahmud Shah, got Mahmud Gawan executed and became the prime minister and eventually the de facto ruler. His tomb is plain and small with a conical dome for which bricks with decreasing girth were used for better stability. Since it is not plastered, building techniques of the time can be seen easily. Ali Barid Shah's tomb, built by him three years before his death in 1577, is one of the finest examples of Islamic architecture. A two storied gateway leads to the 70 ft-high tomb with a big dome supported by four pillars and a grand pavilion set on a high platform built in green granite and laterite. Rich floral designs have been carved on stone and painted tiles and calligraphic patterns line the inside of the dome. In front of it is the tomb of Ibrahim Barid Shah, similar in design but smaller. The tomb of the last sultan Qasim Barid



The Chaubara watchtower; Barid Shahi tombs; Guru Nanak Jhira Sahib gurdwara

II (1587-1591) has a squat façade and spiral motifs in the arch of the southern entrance. Several pyramidal tombs can also be found in the same enclosure.

Guru Nanak Jhira Sahib

Located near Ali Barid's tomb, Guru Nanak Jheera is said to be the largest Sikh temple in Karnataka. The story goes that the first Sikh guru visited Bidar in April 1512 when the area was in the grips of a severe famine. To rid the scarcity of drinking water, Guru Nanak uttered 'Sat Kartar', shifted a stone with his wooden sandal, and out gushed a crystal clear spring of sweet water from a laterite trap in the mountain. This place came to be known as Nanak Jhira

(*jhira* means spring) after the miraculous mountain spring with medicinal properties. An Amrit Kund was built at the origin of the spring and devotees sprinkle holy water and collect some to take home. Visitors must cover their heads to enter the *gurdwara*. The small Guru Tegh Bahadur Museum in the complex showcases Sikh history. Every year, thousands of Sikhs from across the country visit Guru Nanak Jhira, which defies region's aridity by gushing forth all year round.

Jharna Narasimha Temple

The subterranean temple carved into a plateau is located in a cave approachable by a 100 m-passage filled with chest-high water. The

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→ GETTING THERE

Air Nearest airport: Rajiv Gandhi International Airport, Hyderabad (137km/ 2 1/2 hrs). Taxi ₹10-14 per km

Rail Bidar Station is connected to Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Shirdi, Pune, Aurangabad and other cities by the Mumbai-Bidar Express, Pune-Hyderabad Express, Machilipatnam-Bidar SF Express, Hazur Sahib Nanded-Bengaluru Express, Yesvantpur-Bidar Express etc

Road Bidar is quite well connected by National Highways to Bengaluru and Hyderabad **Bus** It is about 14-15hrs ride by several bus services from Bengaluru, including KSRTC's (Tel: 080-49596666) Rajhansa service (₹1,006) Airavat Club (₹1,187), Non A/c Sleeper (₹1,439). KSRTC also offers two services from Hyderabad, which are — Rajhansa (₹195/ 3hrs) and Airavat Club ₹287/3 1/2 hrs)

Bidri

Bidar is known for a special type of encrusted metalware known as bidri characterized by intricate floral and geometric designs, inlaid in gold, silver or brass onto a black matte surface. The ancient and attractive craft evolved over 4000 years ago from the culture-rich Persians, Syrians and Iranians and came to Bidar in early 15th century. Abdulla-bin-Kaiser, a Persian artisan brought from Iran by Sultan Ahmed Shah Wali Bahmani introduced the craft to others in the Mahmud Gawan madrasa. From ornamentation of royal swords and weapons, the Sultans extended its use to vases, goblets and hookah bases. By mid-17th century, the craft was popular as 'Bidari'. The original Persian technique involved inlaying gold or silver on a steel or copper base. However, today, the base metal is a zinc-copper alloy in the proportion 16:1 with designs in silver or brass. The zinc gives the alloy a deep black color. Each Bidri piece is cast separately using a

mould of ordinary soil made malleable with castor oil and resin. The molten metal alloy is poured into it and allowed to cool and harden. The surface is smoothed with files and scrapers till it shines. It is then blackened with copper sulphate solution to be etched into a traditional design. With the Bidri piece firmly fixed on a waxed stone, the craftsman uses small chisels to engrave the design, drawn freehand with a sharp metal stylus. Into these chiseled grooves, he carefully hammers pure silver in the form of fine wire or flat sheet. After the inlay, the article is filed smooth and buffed. During the final oxidation process, the shiny surface is blackened so that the silver inlay design stands out. There is a particular type of soil found in this area which when mixed with ammonium chloride and water, produces a very special paste. When rubbed onto the heated Bidri article, the paste darkens the body of the piece, but has no effect on the intricate silver inlay. Finally, groundnut or coconut oil is used to polish each item and deepen the black matte coating.



temple authorities rent out clothes for visitors who wade through the murky waters of the underground *jharna* (stream), past overhanging colonies of bats, for a *darshan* of Lord Narasimha. Legends recount a fight between Lord Narasimha and Jala Rakshasa (water demon) and how the demon was defeated. However his dying wish was to be close to the lord, hence, the unusual underwater access to the shrine where the Lord is in his *ugra roopa* (fierce form). For this reason, devotees do not see the idol directly but only in the reflection of a plate held by the priest.



Paan, a local favourite

Papanaash Temple

The beautiful Papanaash temple is located in a valley and is dedicated to Lord Shiva. Legend has it that Lord Rama installed the *linga* here, on his return from Sri Lanka. People also believe that one can see snakes guarding the idol especially during Shivaratri. A natural spring flows into the temple pond, believed to have curative powers.

Dev Dev Vana

An Eco-Tourism center, 6 km from Bidar town on the Hyderabad Highway, Dev Dev Vana is a Botanical Garden home to more than 200 medicinal plants.

SHOPPING

Bidriware can be bought from several workshop-cum-showrooms on Chowbara Road. From vases, boxes, letter openers to decorative and utilitarian items, it is all here.

WHERE TO EAT

While in Bidar, try the *langar* (mela at the free kitchen) at Gurudwara Nanak Jhira Saheb. Rohit Restaurant at Guru Nanak Colony inside Guru Nanak Gate en route to the gurudwara is excellent for Punjabi and North Indian veg fare. There are several pure veg options like SSV Restaurant and Kamat Hotel on Udgir Road while Royal Anmol Restarant nearby on New Bus Station Road offers non-veg dishes as well. Try *allu susula*, sometimes mispronounced as 'Sushila', a popular breakfast item of tempered puffed rice. For jowar roti and local food, head to Lakshmi Khanavali or Aum Shree Rakshaka Tiffin & Meals at Madival Circle.

WHERE TO STAY

Most of the accommodation in Bidar comprises simple, basic city hotels to choose from. **Hotel Shiva**



An arch at Basavakalyan, known as the place where many saints lived

International (Cell: 09900292989; Tariff: ₹800-1,700) opposite Akkamahadevi College, next to the Reliance Petrol Bunk, New on Naubad Road, Nawadgeri has 34 clean but basic rooms with room service. The **Sai Palace Lodge** (Cell: 09448335886; Tariff: ₹650-1,000; TE) opposite the Central Bus Stand, behind Mayura Restaurant in Shiva Nagar, offers 31 rooms and has its own multi-cuisine restaurant and bar. **Hotel The Krishna Regency** (Tel: 08482-221991; Cell: 09341111136; Tariff: ₹850-1,500) at Swamy Towers on Udgir Road, near the KSRTC bus stand offers 22 decent rooms, with room service. Another option is the budget **Hotel Ashoka** (Tel: 08482-227621; Cell: 094481261551; Tariff: ₹700-1,000) near Deepak Film Talkies, opposite

Sales Tax Office, Gandhiganj, offers 22 basic rooms. **Jungle Lodges' Blackbuck Resort** (Tel: 080-40554055; Cell: 09611158198; Tariff: ₹5,200 pp + meals & activities) is 18km from town and in close proximity to Vilaspur Lake and Honnikeri Reserve Forest offers 18 cottages, nature walks, bird watching, trekking and safaris

For more, see Bidar Accommodation Listings on page 432

AROUND BIDAR

Jalasangvi (40km)

Located 10km northwest of Humnabad off the Bidar-Kalaburagi highway towards Dubalgundi, Jalasangvi was built by King Vikramaditya VI of the Kalyana

Chalukya dynasty. The 11th century Iswara temple here is dedicated to Kamalishvara and has splendid sculptures of Ganesha and Narasimha. The temple's exterior walls are adorned with bracket figures of seductive *madanikas* that are 'moon-breasted, swan-waisted and elephant-hipped' in alluring poses — *shasana sundari* or *shilabalika* inscribing an epigraph and *salabhanjika* in *tribhanga* (tri-bent) pose while holding the branch of a sal tree. The star-shaped temple plan and sculptures were evidently the source of inspiration for the celebrated Hoysala bracket figures at Belur, Halebidu and Somanathapura.



Courtesy WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Iswara Temple, Jalasangvi

Basavakalyan (78 km)

King Someshwara I (1042–1068) moved the capital of the Kalyani Chalukyas from Manyakheta (present Malkhed) to Kalyan in 1050 and it remained so till 1195. This was the centre of a great social and religious upheaval in 12th century. Famed for its cultural heritage and renowned for the saints who made the town their home, including social reformer Basaveshwara, Akka-Mahadevi, Channabasavanna and Siddarama, Basavakalyan became a seat of learning and spiritual wisdom. Of importance here are the Basavakalyan Fort, museum with 10th century Jain idols and Basaveshwara Temple. ■

Humnabad (52km)

Humnabad is famous for its ancient temples. The serene shrine of Lord Veerbhadreshwara dates back to 1725 and is greatly renowned for its unique moving pillar. The colourful annual *jatra* (fair) is held over 10 days from 26 January and the mahotsava features pulling *rathas* or temple chariots. A similar festival is held in November at Changlara village nearby. Also worth a look is the Manik Prabhu temple at Humnabad dedicated to the famous ascetic and overlooking the turbulent confluence of the lovely Viraja and Guru Ganga streams.

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TOURIST OFFICES

INFORMATION  INFORMATION & BOOKING  **Karnataka Tourism**www.karnatakaturism.org**Karnataka State Tourism
Development Corporation
(KSTDC)**www.kstdc.co**Jungle Lodges and
Resorts Ltd**www.junglelodges.com**The Golden Chariot**www.goldenchariot.org**STATE TOURISM OFFICES****BENGALURU****Department of Tourism (HO)
Government of Karnataka**
 

No. 49, 2nd Floor, Khanija
Bhavan, Race Course Road
Bengaluru
Tel 080-22352525/ 2727/ 2828
Cell 09686633491
07795516979 District Tourism
Consultant (DTC)

**Office of the Deputy Director
(Urban) **

District Panchayath Bldg
KG Road, Bengaluru
Tel 22204415
Cell 09686633491

**Office of the Assistant 
Director (Rural)**

DC Office Complex
213 Chapparkalu
Dheer Sandra
Devanahalli
Bengaluru
Cell 09591778824 (DTC)

**Karnataka State Tourism  
Development Corporation
(KSTDC)**

Central Reservation Office

Ground Floor, BMTC
Yeshwantpur TTMC (Bus
Stand), Yeshwantpur Circle
Bengaluru
Tel 43344334
Cell 08970650070/ 75

BADAMI**KSTDC  **

Hotel Mayura Chalukya
Ramdurg Road
PWD Compound
Badami
Tel 08357-220046
Cell 08970650024

COORG**KSTDC  **

Hotel Mayura Talakavery
Virajpet-Talakaveri Road
Bhagamandala
Coorg
Tel 08272-243143
Cell 08970650030

HOSPET/ HAMPI**Department of Tourism 
Office of the Deputy Director**

Near Lotus Mahal
Kamalapur, Hospet Taluk
Hospet (Bellary)
Cell 07996463857 (TO)
08660646812 (DTC)

KSTDC  

Hotel Mayura Bhuvaneshwari
Kamalapur, Hampi, Bellary
Tel 08394-241574
Cell 08970650025

KARWAR**Department of Tourism 
Office of the Deputy Director**

NH-17, Near RTO Office
Goa Main Road Karwar

Uttara Kannada
Tel 08382-221172
Cell 09483132206 (TO)
09742322901 (DTC)

MADIKERI**Department of Tourism 
Office of the Assistant
Director**

Stewart Hills Road, Madikeri
Kodagu
Tel 08272-228580
Cell 09448004466 (TO)

KSTDC  

Hotel Mayura Valley View
Near Raja's Seat, Stuart Hill
Madikeri
Cell 08970650028

MANGALURU**Department of Tourism 
Office of the Assistant
Director**

Room No. 02, Commercial
Complex, 1st Floor, Dakshina
Kannada, Mangaluru
Tel 0824-2453926
Cell 08105472464 (DTC)

MYSURU**Karnataka State Tourism  
Development Corporation
(KSTDC)**

2, Jhansi Rani Laxmi Bai
Road, Mysuru
Tel 0821-2423652
Cell 08970650109

VIJAYAPURA**KSTDC  **

Hotel Mayura Adil Shahi
Station Road, Vijayapura
Tel 250401
Cell 08970650031 ■

BENGALURU STD 080**Arjun Tours & Travels**

Location Karnataka Tourism
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St. Marks Rd, Bengaluru
Tel 22217054 **Cell** 099019
09419 www.arjuntours.com
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Road 4th Block, Jayanagar
Bengaluru **Tel** 22441763
Cell 09845064452
www.hoysalators.com
Services Tour packages,
safaris, accommodation,
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TOUR OPERATORS

Sky Way Tour

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Papanna Lane, St. Marks
Road, Bengaluru **Tel** 22111401
Cell 08884467467 www.skywaytour.com
Services Tour
packages, accommodation,
transport, JLR/ Golden Chariot
bookings **Destinations** All
Karnataka

DANDELI STD 08284**Dandeli.Com (Rafting)**

Location Solad Complex, Opp
Syndicate Bank, JN Road
Dandeli **Tel** 233721 **Cell**
09902474761 www.dandeli.com,
thekarnatakaturism.com
Services Tour packages,
accommodation, transport,
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activities **Destinations** All
Karnataka

HAMPI STD 08394**Hamsa Tours & Travel
(Bouldering)**

Location Travel Desk Heritage
Resort Hampi,
Hosamalpangudi, Hampi Road
Ballai **Cell** 08884489443,
09686552820, 09845205589
www.hamsatours.com
Services
Accommodation, rock climbing,
bouldering, village tours,
seasonal winery tour, bird
watching, guide **Destinations**
Hampi, Badami, Vijayapura
and other parts of Karnataka

Travel Maaya (Bicycle Tours)

Location Opp to Mango Tree
Restaurant, Janatha Plot
Hampi **Cell** 09482826490,
09152924551 **Services** Tour
packages, accommodation,
transport, bicycle tours,

trekking **Destinations** All
Karnataka, excluding Coorg,
Madikeri

NAGARAHOLE STD 0821**JLR (Wildlife Safari-
Karnataka)**

Location JLR King's
Sanctuary, Veerana Hosahali
Gate, Nagarahole, Hunsur **Cell**
09591139114, 09480395742,
09632566454 www.junglelodges.com
Services Accommodation,
Wildlife Jungle Safari
Destinations All wildlife
sanctuaries of Karnataka ■

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2, Sultan Battery Ferry Line,
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Cell 09482213019 www.surf-mangalore.com
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slack lining, training on surf
lifesaving **Destination**
Tannir Bavi Beach, Mangaluru

The Shaka Surf Club

Location Kodi Bengre,
Udupi **Cell** 09986742710
www.theshakasurfclub.com
Services Accommodation
with local cuisines, surf
camp, kayaking, yoga **Tariff**
₹5,000/person/night +meals,
stay, 2 surf lesson
Destination Kodi Bengre
Beach, Udupi

TRANSPORT DIRECTORY

AIR

KEMPEGOWDA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (BIAL)

Also known as Bengaluru International Airport, it is located at Devanahalli, 40 km from Bengaluru

HELPLINES

Toll Free: 18004254425

[W bengaluruairport.com](http://www.bengaluruairport.com)

AIRLINE OFFICES

AIR INDIA

Airport Tel: 080-66785161, 22978423

Toll Free: 18602331407 [W airindia.in](http://www.airindia.in)

Madurai (via Chennai)

ALLIANCE AIR

Toll Free: 18602331407 [W airindia.in/alliance-air](http://www.airindia.in/alliance-air)

GO AIR

Customer Care: 022-62732111

Toll Free: 18602100999 [W goair.in](http://www.goair.in)

INDIGO

Tel: 0124-6173838

Cell: 09910383838 [W goindigo.in](http://www.goindigo.in)

SPICEJET

Cell: 09871803333, 09654003333

[W spicejet.com](http://www.spicejet.com)

STARAIR

Airport Tel: 080-66783303 [W starair.in](http://www.starair.in)

Origin: Belgaum, Tirupati (via Hubballi)

TRUJET

Customer Care Tel: 040-40904090 [W trujet.com](http://www.trujet.com)

Origin Jindal Vidyanagar

VISTARA

Cell: 09289228888 [W airvistara.com](http://www.airvistara.com)

Origin: Ahmedabad, Delhi

AIRPORT TRANSFERS

TAXIS

Pre-Paid Taxi

KSTDC City Taxi Tel: 080-41553333

Cell: 09880121969 [W kstdccitycabs.com](http://www.kstdccitycabs.com)

State-run KSTDC city taxis are metered; fare Rs 14.50-19.50/ km

Mega Cabs

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KSRTC Flybus

Kempegowda Airport, Bengaluru

Helpline Cell: 09972213726

Customer Care Tel: 080-44554422

KSRTC's 24-hrs non-stop Flybus, hourly service operates between:

Kempegowda Airport and Mysuru— (4 hrs/ ₹800)

Kempegowda Airport and Manipal, via Mangaluru — (9-10 hrs/₹1,250)

Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport

Corporation's (BMTC) Airport Shuttle Service

Helpline: 18004251663 [W mybmtc.com](http://www.mybmtc.com)

Air-conditioned Volvo buses (Vayu Vajra) run every 15-20 mins between the airport and the city

MANGALURU INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Mangaluru Airport is 13km from town

HELPLINES

Kenjar, Bajpe, Mangaluru

Airport Director Tel: 0824-2220400

[W mangaloreairport.com](http://www.mangaloreairport.com); [aai.aero](http://www.aai.aero)

AIRLINE OFFICES

AIR INDIA

Toll Free: 18602331407 [W airindia.in](http://www.airindia.in)

INDIGO

Tel: 0124-6173838 Cell: 09910383838

[W goindigo.in](http://www.goindigo.in)

SPICEJET

Cell: 09871803333, 09654003333

[W spicejet.com](http://www.spicejet.com)

AIRPORT TRANSFERS

KSRTC operates frequent bus services to the city.

There's a 24-hr Prepaid Taxi Counter as well

SAMBRA AIRPORT, BELGAUM

Belgaum Airport is 10km from town

HELPLINES

Airport Director Tel: 0831-2562020

[W aai.aero](http://www.aai.aero)

AIRLINE OFFICES

AIRINDIA

Toll Free: 18602331407 [W airindia.in](http://www.airindia.in)

STARAIR

Airport Tel: 080-66783303 [W starair.in](http://www.starair.in)

Origin: Bengaluru

TIP SpiceJet operates flights from Hyderabad

and StarAir now flies from Ahmedabad to

Belgaum on all days except Tuesdays

MYSURU AIRPORT

Distance from Mysuru Airport to town is 10km

HELPLINES

Airport Tel: 0821-2596802 [W aai.aero](http://www.aai.aero)

AIRLINE OFFICE

TRUJET

Customer Care Tel: 040-40904090 [W trujet.com](http://www.trujet.com)

Origin: Chennai

HUBBALLI AIRPORT

The airport is 8 km from town

AIRLINE OFFICES

SPICEJET

Cell: 09871803333, 09654003333 [W spicejet.com](http://www.spicejet.com)

STARAIR

Airport Tel: 080-66783303 [W starair.in](http://www.starair.in)

Origin: Bengaluru, Jindal Vidyanagar, Tirupati

JINDAL VIDYANAGAR AIRPORT, BELLARY

Distance from Jindal Airport to town is 36km

AIRLINE OFFICE

TRUJET

Customer Care Tel: 040-40904090 [W trujet.com](http://www.trujet.com)

Origin: Bengaluru, Hubballi

RAIL

HELPLINES

Enquiry – 139

Online information and reservation [W indianrail.gov.in](http://www.indianrail.gov.in); irctc.co.in

BENGALURU

The city has three major railheads:

BENGALURU CANTT RAILWAY STATION

Located in the Cantonment in Vasant Nagar this station connects to major metros and cities across India

BENGALURU CITY JUNCTION

This station connects Bengaluru to major metros and cities across India

YESHWANTPUR RAILWAY STATION

This station is served by long distance trains from major metros and cities in India

MANGALURU

The city's major railheads are:

MANGALURU CENTRAL RAILWAY STATION

Located on Old Kent Road, Hampankatta this station is connected to major metros and cities in India

MANGALURU JUNCTION RAILWAY STATION

Situated on the outskirts of the city it is well connected to major metros and cities in India

SURATHKAL RAILWAY STATION

This station is located in Kadambodi and offers connections to Thiruvananthapuram, Alapuzha, Ernakulum, Madgaon, Ratnagiri, Mumbai, etc.

MYSURU

MYSURU JUNCTION

This station is connected to major metros and cities in India

HASSAN

HASSAN JUNCTION

This station is connected to major metros and cities in India

SRIRANGAPATNA

SRIRANGAPATNA RAILWAY STATION

This station is a convenient link for Sravanabelagola (81km/2hrs from Bengaluru)

NANJANGUD

NANJANGUD RAILWAY STATION

This is the nearest railhead for Bandipur (54km) but Mysuru is the bigger railway station with better connections

BIRUR

BIRUR JUNCTION

This station is a convenient railhead for Chikkamagaluru (46km), Shivgiri Trails (17km) and Kemmanagudi (35km). It is connected to major metros and cities in India

VIJAYAPURA/ BIJAPUR

BIJAPUR RAILWAY STATION

Located near Gol Gumbaz this station is connected to major metros and cities in India

HOSPET

HOSPET RAILWAY STATION

This station is connected to major metros and cities in India

KARNATAKA COASTAL AREA

DHARWAD RAILWAY STATION

This station is connected to major metros and cities in India

GOKARNA RAILWAY STATION

This station is an important stop on the Konkan Line and is connected to Mumbai, Panjim, Mangaluru and Ernakulum

HUBLI RAILWAY STATION

This station is connected to major metros and cities in India

KARWAR RAILWAY STATION

This station is connected to major metros and cities in India

SHIMOGA RAILWAY STATION

It is the nearest (80km) railhead for Honnemarduru and is linked to Bengaluru

UDUPI RAILWAY STATION

It offers linkages between the north and south along the west coast by the Konkan line.

ROAD

BENGALURU

TAXI

KSTDC City Taxi

Tel: 080-41553333

Cell: 09880121969

www.kstdccitycabs.com

RADIO CABS

Easy Cabs

Tel: 080-43434343

www.easycabs.com

Mega Cabs

Tel: 080-47474747

www.megacabs.com

Meru Cabs

Tel: 080-44224422

www.merucabs.in

Ola Cabs

www.olacabs.com

CAR RENTALS

Clear Car Rental

Cell: 08888855220

www.clearcarrental.com

BUS

BENGALURU METROPOLITAN TRANSPORT CORPORATION (BMTC)

HELPLINES

Control Room Cell: 07760991399

BMTC BUS STANDS

Kempegowda Bus Stand Tel: 080-22952311, 22952314

Shivajinagar Bus Stand Tel: 080-22952321, 22952324

BMTC runs both ordinary and air-conditioned luxury buses on major routes. The BMTC's Airport Shuttle Service, operated the air-conditioned Vayu Vajra Volvo bus is very convenient for the city-airport run.

Vayu Vajra also operate along some routes within the city.

KARNATAKA STATE ROAD TRANSPORT CORPORATION (KSRTC)

HELPLINES

Control Room Cell: 07760990100, 07760990560

General Enquiry Tel: 080-49596666

KSRTC BUS STANDS

Satellite Bus Stand Cell: 07760990530

Shantinagar Bus Stand Cell: 07760990531

KSRTC offers connectivity from Bengaluru within the State and beyond; its services include FLYBUS, Airavat Bliss, Airavat Superia and Volvo Club Class

PRIVATE BUS SERVICES

Sugama Tourists

Location: No 7, Vishwa Complex, 2nd Cross, Gandhinagar; Tel: 080-22377777

www.sugamatourists.com

Tejas Tours & Travels

Location 2, Shiva Garden, Opp BMT Bus Depot, Old Madras Road, Hoskote; Tel: 27906363, 29706363 Cell: 09980277773

www.tejatravels.com

MANGALURU

TAXI

Cel Cabs Cell: 09243603037, 09343135100

www.celcabs.com

CAR RENTALS

City Taxi Tours & Travels

Location: Near Don Bosco Hall, Bolmatta

Cell: 07795012677, 07795012699

www.citytaximangalore.com

Mangalore Taxi

Location: 1st Floor, CEE PEE Complex, NH48, Pumpwell; Cell: 09972722878, 09071064179

www.mangaloretaxi.com

BUS

KARNATAKA STATE ROAD TRANSPORT CORPORATION (KSRTC)

KSRTC BUS STAND

Location: Bejai

Gen Enquiry Tel: 0824-2211243

State Bank Bus Stand/Mangaluru Bus Stand

Location: 4th Cross Road, Uppinagadi Village

Gen Enquiry Cell: 09663266001

KSRTC has express and luxury buses connecting Bengaluru, Chennai, Mumbai, Chikkamagaluru, etc. The bus stand is also serviced by Kerala State Transport (KSRTC), Tamil Nadu State Transport Corporation

(TNSTC) and Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (APSRTC)

PRIVATE BUS SERVICES

Ganesh Travels & Tours

Location: Old Bus Stand, Hampankatta

Tel: 0824-2440977

www.ganeshbus.in

MYSURU

TAXI**Mysore Cabs**

Location: 3502, 3rd Main Road, 3rd Cross, Tilak Nagar; Cell: 09972395189 www.mysorecabs.com

Mysore Taxiwala

Location: #1244, 1st Cross, Krishnamurthyapuram
Tel: 0821-4264040 Cell: 09972110099

www.mysoretaxiwala.com

BUS

KARNATAKA STATE ROAD TRANSPORT CORPORATION (KSRTC)

KSRTC BUS STAND

Gen Enquiry Cell: 07760990763

KSRTC City Bus Stand Cell: 07760990954

KSRTC HELPLINES

Chamarajnagar Bus Depot Cell: 07760990313

Chikkamagaluru Gen Enquiry Cell:

07760990419-20 Hassan Gen Enquiry Cell:

07760990523

The KSRTC Terminal is located opposite the main Railway Station. It offers services for long distance travel. KSRTC's Skybus service from and to Kempegowda Airport, Bengaluru has been welcomed as it's swift and cheaper than taxi.

PRIVATE BUS SERVICES

Seabird Tourists

2932/L32, Shop No 12, Bengaluru-Nilgiri Road
Near Kalyan Jewellers, Five Light Circle

Tel: 4288818 Cell: 09900081578, 09243726812

www.seabirdtourists.com

TIP (Only for Mysuru, Bengaluru, Chennai, Mumbai, Goa) ■

LEGEND

- NA** Not accepted
- NH** National Highway
- NP** National Park
- Opp** Opposite
- PO** Post
- TE** Taxes extra
- WLS** Wildlife Sanctuary

<p>Accommodation type? Spot these flags</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: center; gap: 10px;"> HERITAGE TENTS </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 5px auto;">HOMESTAY</div>	<p>Special Hotel needs? Spot these flags</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: center; gap: 10px;"> SAFARI TREKS SPA </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 5px auto;">ADVENTURE</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 5px auto;">CRUISE</div>
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METRO RESERVATIONS

To book any state tourism hotel in your city, see the Tourist Offices listings on p418

HOTELS EASY ACCESS

Badami	430	Dandeli-Anshi	434	Karwar	439
Bandipur	430	Dharmasthala	435	Kemmannagundi	439
Belgaum	431	Dubare	435	Kollur	440
Belur-Halebid	431	Gokarna	435	Kudremukh	440
Bengaluru	431	Hampi/Hospet	436	Kukke Subrahmanya	440
Bhadra Wildlife Sanctuary	432	Hassan	437	Lakkavalli	440
Bhagamandala	433	Honnemardu	437	Madikeri	441
Bidar	433	Honaradu	437	Mangaluru	441
BR Hills	433	Huli Vana	438	Mysuru	442
Brahmagiri	433	Jog Falls	438	Polibetta	443
Chikkamagaluru	434	Kalaburagi	438	Shravanabelagola	444
Chitradurga	434	Kakkabe	438	Srirangapatna	444

BADAMI STD 08357

Clarks Inn
Location 1755, Veerpulakeshi Circle, Badami Main Road
Tel 220150 **Cell** 09717170573, 09650500634 **W** clarksinn.in
Rooms 40 **Tariff** ₹3,500-5,500 +breakfast; TE
Facilities Restaurant, bar, room service, TV

Hotel Badami Court
Location 17/ 2, Station Road
Tel 220207, 220230-32 **W** hotelbadamicourt.com **Rooms** 28 **Tariff** ₹3,750-5,600 +breakfast **Facilities** Restaurant, swimming pool, travel desk, Internet

Hotel Mayura Chalukya
KSTDC

Location Near Cave Temples, Ramadurg Road **Tel** 220046
Cell 8970650024 **W** kstdc.co
Rooms 26 **Tariff** ₹1,000-2,750; TE
Facilities Restaurant, beer bar, travel help, parking, TV

IN AIHOLE STD 08351

Hotel Mayura Yatri Nivas
Location Aihole **Cell** 09591164103 **Rooms** 24 **Tariff** ₹1,200-1,500 **Facilities** Restaurant, Internet, TV

BANDIPUR NP STD 08229

Bandipur Safari Lodge **JLR**
Location Adjacent to the NP

Melkamanahalli, Mangala, Gundlupet **Tel** 233001 **Cell** 09449597880, 09449599794, 09449599779 **W** junglelodges.com **Rooms** 22 cottages **Tariff** ₹6,800-8,300 + meals + 2 safaris pp **Facilities** Restaurant, bar, nature walks

Country Club

Location Mangala Village, 3 km off Bandipur Checkpost
Tel 236090-91/ 94/ 96/ 37-38 **W** countryclubholidays.com **Rooms** 18 **Tariff** ₹4,000 + meals pp **Facilities** Restaurant, nature walk, Internet
TIP Formerly Bush Betta Wildlife Resort

Forest Department

Cottages **FRH**
Location Inside the forest, Bandipur NP **Tel** 236043/ 51/ 60 **W** bandipurtigerreserve.in
Rooms 19, dorms 3 **Tariff** ₹1,600, dorm ₹2,016-4,470 +park charges **Facilities** Dining hall, jungle safari, wildlife movie
TIP Online Reservations

The Serai Resort

Location Kaniyanapura Mangala, Gundlupet **Tel** 236075, 080-40012200
Reservations Cell 094898 23601 **W** theserai.in **Rooms** 24 **Tariff** ₹14,500-17,400 +breakfast; TE **Facilities** Restaurant, bar, swimming pool, spa, safaris, treks, bird watching, nature walks

The Windflower Tusker Trail

Location Near the NP Mangala Village, Gundlupet **Tel** 236055/ 66 Bengaluru **Tel** 080-40012200 **Cell** 09901446666/ 09900613333 **W** thewindflower.com **Rooms** 22, cottages 15 **Tariff** ₹15,930-16,990 + meals **Facilities** Restaurant, bar, parking, swimming pool, spa, jungle walk

BELGAUM STD 0831

Southern Star Belgaum

Location Opp Belgaum Golf Course, Katgali Road, Desur Khanapur **Cell** 07676902709 **W** hotelsouthernstar.com
Rooms 13 **Tariff** ₹3,500 +breakfast; TE **Facilities** Restaurant, internet, room service, TV

IN CHIGARIMALE

Belgavi Nature Camp **JLR**
Location Opp Rani Channamma University Chigarimale, Halabhavi Village Kakati **Cell** 09449599782 **W** junglelodges.com **Rooms** 5 cottages **Tariff** ₹1,200 +meals, nature walks pp **Facilities** Dining area, nature walks, visit to Rani Channamma Zoo

BENGALURU STD 080

Bengaluru Marriott Hotel Whitefield
Location 8th Road, Plot No. 75, EPIP Area **Tel** 49435000 **W** marriott.com **Rooms** 388 **Tariff** ₹8,700-18,000 +breakfast; TE
Facilities Restaurants, bar, swimming pool, gym, spa

Hotel Ramanashree

Location 16 Raja Ram Mohan

Roy Road, Opp ITC Gardenia Near Richmond Circle **Tel** 41350000-01 **W** ramanashree.com **Rooms** 68 **Tariff** ₹5,500-9,000 +breakfast; TE
Facilities Restaurants, gym, travel help

Lemon Tree Premier

Location 2/1, St John's Road Ulsoor **Tel** 44802000 **W** lemontreehotels.com **Rooms** 188 **Tariff** ₹4,500-30,000 +breakfast; TE **Facilities** Restaurant, bar, swimming pool, spa, gym

New Kumarakrupa Guest House **KSTDC**

Location Kumarakrupa Road **Tel** 22259404-07 **W** kstdc.co
Rooms 150 **Tariff** ₹2,240
Facilities Restaurant, travel help, internet, parking, TV

Sheraton Grand

Bangalore Hotel
Location 26/ 1, Dr Rajkumar Road, Malleswaram-Rajajinagar **Tel** 42521000 **W** marriott.com **Rooms** 230 **Tariff** ₹10,500- 69,500+breakfast; TE **Facilities** Restaurants, bar, swimming pool, gym, spa



St Mark's Hotel

Location 4/ 1, St Mark's Road
Tel 40019000 **W** stmarkshotel.com
Rooms 96 **Tariff** ₹7,495 +breakfast
Facilities Restaurants, bar, gym

Taj MG Road

Location 41/ 3, MG Road **Tel** 66604444 **W** tajhotels.com
Rooms 165 **Tariff** ₹11,350-20,350 +breakfast
Facilities Restaurants, bar, gym, spa

The Capitol

Location Opposite GPO, Raj Bhavan Road **Tel** 22281234, 22267076 **W** thecapitolhotel.com
Rooms 140 **Tariff** ₹4,000-12,000 +breakfast
Facilities Restaurant, bar, pool, gym

The Chancery

Location 10/ 6, Lavelle Road **Tel** 41188888 **W** chanceryhotels.com
Rooms 130 **Tariff** ₹4,500-14,000 +breakfast; TE
Facilities Restaurant, gym, travel help, internet

The Elanza Hotel

Location 88/ 2, Richmond Road **Tel** 22233666 **W** theelanzahotels.com
Rooms 43 **Tariff** ₹5,500-6,600 +breakfast; TE
Facilities Restaurant, bar, gym, internet, TV

**The Gateway Hotel
Residency Road**

Location 66 Residency Road **Tel** 66604545 **W** tajhotels.com
Rooms 98 **Tariff** ₹10,880-14,270 +breakfast
Facilities Restaurants, cafe, pool, spa

The Leela Palace

Location 23, Kodihalli, Old Airport Road **Tel** 25211234 **W** theleela.com
Rooms 357 **Tariff** ₹13,375-2,67,500 +breakfast; TE
Facilities Restaurants, bar, swimming pool, spa, gym

The Oberoi

Location 37-39, Mahatma Gandhi Road **Tel** 25585858 **W** oberoihotels.com
Rooms 160 **Tariff** ₹12,500-1,25,000 +breakfast; TE
Facilities Restaurants, bar, swimming pool, spa, gym

The Park

Location 14/ 7 Mahatma Gandhi Road **Tel** 25594666 **W** theparkhotels.com
Rooms 109 **Tariff** ₹6,000-11,000 +breakfast; TE
Facilities Restaurants, bar, pool, spa, gym

IN MEKEDATU

Hotel Mayura Sangama
KSTDC
Location Kanakapura Tal Ramanagar **Tel** 080-29760100
Cell 09483035533 **W** kstdc.co
Rooms 14, 1 dorm (14 beds) **Tariff** ₹1,456-1,680 dorm ₹2,800
Facilities Restaurant, travel help

**BHADRA WILDLIFE SANCTUARY
STD 08262**

Eagle Eye Holidays
Location Between Bhadra and Muthodi Wildlife Sanctuary Hoscodu Estate, via Sangameshwarpet, Kadavanthi **Tel** 252153/ 44 **Cell** 09341415588 09481252153/ 09880827762

W eagleeyeholidays.in **Rooms** 15 houses, 43 villas, cottages 10 **Tariff** ₹3,500-6,500 +meals, activities) **Facilities** Restaurant, swimming pool, adventure activities, travel help
TIP Glasshouses have their own indoor swimming pools
Jhari Eco Stay
Location Datha Peetha Road Athigundi Village **Cell** 098860 03791/ 09886787039 **W** jhari.in
Rooms 8 **Tariff** ₹7,500; TE + meals, amenities **Facilities** Buffet meals, nature walks

BHAGAMANDALA STD 08272

Hotel Mayura Talakavery
KSTDC
Location Bhagamandala Madikeri, Coorg **Tel** 08272-243143 **Cell** 08970650030
Rooms 18, dorms 2 (8/ 22 bedded) **Tariff** ₹1,344-1,500, dorm ₹2,400 (8pax) / 4,400 (22pax), ₹300/ pp
Facilities Veg restaurant

BIDAR STD 08482

Blackbuck Resort **JLR**
Location Vilasapur Taluk **Cell** 09740880119, 09611158198 **W** junglelodges.com
Rooms 18 cottages **Tariff** ₹5,200 meals + activities pp
Facilities Dining hall, nature walks, bird watching, trekking, safaris, film
Bengaluru Reservations Tel 080-40554055

Hotel Shiva International
Location Opp Akkamahadevi College, Next to Reliance Petrol Bunk, New Bus Stand Naubad Road, Nawadgeri **Cell**

09900292989 **W** theshivainter national.com
Rooms 34 **Tariff** ₹800-1,700; TE
Facilities Basic accommodation, room service

The Krishna Regency

Location 8-9-285/ A-4 Swamy Towers, Udgir Road Devi Colony **Tel** 221991 **Cell** 09341111136
Rooms 22 **Tariff** ₹850-1,500
Facilities Room service, TV

BR HILLS STD 08226

Hotel Mayura Biligiri **KSTDC**
Location Biligiri Hills Yalendur, Chamaraajanagar **Tel** 244111 **Cell** 08970650068 **W** kstdc.co
Rooms 16 **Tariff** ₹999-2,240
Facilities Veg restaurant, internet, attached bath

K Gudi Wilderness Camp **JLR**

Location In the forest, Kyatha Devaranya Gudi, BRT Wildlife Sanctuary, Dist Chamaraaja-nagar **Tel** 211886 **Cell** 094495 99790, 09379676618 **W** junglelodges.com
Rooms 4, log huts 3, tented cottages 8 **Tariff** ₹5,570-8,124 + meals pp
Facilities Elephant rides, jeep safari, trekking
Bengaluru Reservations

Jungle Lodges and Resorts **Tel** 080-40554055

Nijaguna Resorts & Spa

Location Nijaguna Park, K N Pura Road, Chamaraajanagar **Tel** 222463 **Cell** 09902984872 **W** nijagunaresorts.co.in
Rooms 25 **Tariff** ₹4,500-8,500+ breakfast; TE
Facilities Restaurant, bar, spa, pool, gym, internet

BRAHMAGIRI WLS STD 08274

Bethel **HOMESTAY**
Location 6 km from Irpu Bethel Estates, Bhiruga Village, Srimangala **W** bethelehomestaycoorg.com
Rooms 4 cottages, 2 tree houses **Tariff** ₹2,500 per person + meals
Facilities Dining area, trekking, river wading, safari, solar power, generators, room service
Bengaluru Reservations Cell 09972362052, 09448201771

Coorg Guest House

Location Main Road Srimangala **Cell** 09901205450 **W** coorgguesthouse.com
Rooms 8, dorm 1 **Tariff** ₹1,500-3,500; TE, dorm ₹500 pp
Facilities Dining hall

IN IRPU STD 08274

Irpu Resorts **HOMESTAY**
Location Near Irpu Falls, amidst coffee plantations, Kurchi Village, via Srimangala, South Kodagu **Cell** 09448475222, 09980461418
Rooms 3 **Tariff** ₹2,000 per person + meals pp
Facilities Home-cooked meals, plantation walks, garden

Ramcad Guest House

Location Near Irpu Falls, Ramcad Estate, Near Irpu Temple, Kodagu **Cell** 094481 44982
Rooms 5 cottages **Tariff** ₹1,800 + meals pp
Facilities Trekking arranged on prior request, room service

CHIKKAMAGALURU STD 08262

Coffee Village Retreat
Location Kimmane Plantation Billur PO, Mudigere **Cell** 09448182987, 09742896744 **W** coffeevillageretreat.com
Rooms 5 **Tariff** ₹2,500-3,500 + meals pp
Facilities Dining hall, indoor games, trekking, fishing, cycling, sightseeing

Devigiri Plantation **HOMESTAY**

Location Near the state highway, 12 km from Chikkamagaluru, Hosa Road

Disclaimer Only a representative listing of hotels in each area has been given. The facilities listed may not be exhaustive. Tariff indicates the approx range (lowest to highest) of the rates prevailing at the time of going to press. The listings given here should not be construed as recommendations by the publisher



Arasinaguppe **Cell** 094488 17524, 07019243189 **W** devigiri.co.in **Rooms** tree houses 1, bamboo house 2, tents 6, dorms 1 **Tariff** ₹2,500-3,000 + meals pp, dorms ₹2,200 + meals pp **Facilities** Dining hall, games, common TV

Honeyvale Estate HERITAGE HOMESTAY

Location Amidst coffee plantation, Javali PO, Mudigere Taluk **Cell** 09449825005 **W** honeyvale.com **Rooms** 5 **Tariff** ₹2,800 + meals pp **Facilities** Dining hall, common TV

Nature Nirvana HOMESTAY

Location Bynekhan and EL Dorado Plantations, Baba Budanagiri Hills **W** naturenirvana.com **Rooms** 5, dorms 1 (10 bedded) **Tariff** ₹3,500 + meals pp, dorm ₹3,000 +meals pp **Facilities** Dining area, coracle rides, trekking, fishing, nature walks, plantation tour, birdwatching, TV **Mangaluru Reservations Tel** 0824-4279152 **Cell** 09844042152

The Serai Chikmagalur SPA

Location Beyond Amber Valley Residential School Mughthihalli PO, KM Road **Cell** 09686445488-91 **W** theserai.in **Rooms** 29 **Tariff** ₹24,320-78,720 + breakfast **Facilities** Restaurant, café, bar, pool, spa, gym **Bengaluru Reservations Tel** 080-40012200

CHITRADURGA STD 08194

Hotel Maurya Durg, Chitradurga kSTDC
Location Next to Maharani College, Opp Fort **Tel** 234342 **Cell** 08970656600 **W** kstdc.co

Rooms 12 **Tariff** ₹2,128-2,799 **Facilities** Restaurant, parking, Internet, TV

Hotel Mourya Delux Lodge

Location A Santhe Bagilu Road **Tel** 224448 **Cell** 087222 17277 **W** mouryalodge.in **Rooms** 25 **Tariff** ₹500-900 **Facilities** Basic accommodation, attached bath, TV

Hotel Naveen Regency

Location 7/ 3B, NH4 Bypass Near RTO **Tel** 230052 **Cell** 07406667669 **W** naveenregency.com **Rooms** 37 **Tariff** ₹1,455-3,540 **Facilities** Restaurant, travel help

DANDELI-ANSHI TR STD 08242

Anshi Evergreen Camp FRH
Location Inside the KTR, Anshi-Ulavi Road, Anshi **Tel** 08284-231585 **W** kalitigerdandeli.com **Rooms** 5 tents, 3 cottages, 1 dorm (15 bedded) **Tariff** ₹1,200 tents, ₹1,500 cottages, ₹3,000 per dorm; TE

Bison River Resort

Location Riverside, Village ILVA, PO Ganeshgudi, Uttar Kannada near Dandeli **Tel** 08383-256356 **Cell** 099166 39005 **Rooms** 33 cottages **Tariff** ₹6,000 +meals **Facilities** Restaurant, bar, eco-tourism activities, rafting, water sports, adventure rope activities

Dandeli Jungle Camp and Resort

Location Dandeli-Joida Road Pradhani Village **Cell** 09449244567, 094487 97270 **Rooms** 15 cottages **Tariff** ₹1,750 all incl. pp **Facilities** Restaurant, adventure activities

Kali Wilderness Adventure Camp

Location Riverbank, Kogilban Uttar Kannada **Tel** 230266 **Cell** 09449597871 **Reservation** 080-40554055/ online **W** junglelodges.com **Rooms** 14, tents 11, dorm 1 (10 bedded) **Tariff** ₹4,503-6,608, tent ₹3,781-5,369, dorm ₹1,805-2,360 pp **Facilities** Dining Hall, coracle ride, safari, internet

Kulgi Nature Education Camp FRH

Location Inside the KTR, Kulgi **Tel** 08284-231585 **W** kalitigerdandeli.com **Rooms** 10 tents, 8 cottages, 1 dorm (15 bedded) **Tariff** tents ₹1,200, cottages ₹1,500, dorm ₹3,000 **Facilities** Cook available

Panther Jungle Stay

Location Kogilban Road Badakanshirada, Haliyal Karwar **Cell** 09886911255 **W** pantherstaydandeli.com **Rooms** 2, dorms 3 (24 bedded), camping tents 20 **Tariff** ₹2,000, dorm ₹1,800, camping tents ₹1,400 + meals pp **Facilities** Restaurant, water activities, adventure activities

DHARAMSTHALA STD 08256

Gayatri Guest House
Location Behind the Temple **W** shridharmasthala.org **Rooms** 104 **Tariff** ₹200-300 **Facilities** Lodging, common bath **Reservations** Shri Kshetra Dharmasthala **Tel** 266666

Sannidhi Guest House

Location Near Bahubali Hill **W** shridharmasthala.org **Rooms** 21 **Tariff** ₹1,500-2,000 **Facilities** Lodging only **Reservations Tel** 266666

DUBARE STD 08276

Coorg Dale
Location Ammangala Estate Valnoor PO, Via Kushalnagar **Tel** 267496 **Cell** 09880466496, **W** homestaykodagu.com **Rooms** 2 **Tariff** ₹3,000 + breakfast **Facilities** Home cooked meals, plantation walks, fishing, birdwatching

Dubare Elephant Camp IJR

Location Nanjarayapatna PO, Kushalnagar, Somwarpet Tal **Tel** 080-40554055 **Cell** 094495 97876 **W** junglelodges.com **Rooms** 18 cottages **Tariff** ₹5,393-6,160 + meals pp **Facilities** Trekking, boating, birdwatching **Bengaluru Reservations Tel** 080-40554055 **TIP** Day Visit Time 8.30-11am; **Tariff** ₹1,499 + breakfast, lunch, elephant interpretation, nature walk pp; Elephant bathing and feeding ₹885 + breakfast pp

Veerabhoomi Tourist Village

Location Kudlur village Kudige Road, Kushalnagar **Tel** 278213 **Cell** 09448078113 **W** coorgveerabhoomi.com **Rooms** 28 **Tariff** ₹2,000-6,000 + breakfast **Facilities** Restaurant, spa, pool, DJ music

GOKARNA STD 08386

Hotel Gokarna International
Location Near bus stand Main Road, Ganjigadde Melinker **Tel** 256622, 257368 **Cell** 07899265368 **Rooms** 39 **Tariff** ₹700-1,800; TE **Facilities** Separate veg and non-veg restaurants, room service

Hotel Om International

Location Taramakki Road, Near KSRTC Bus Stand, Ganjigadde **Tel** 256445 **Cell** 09480603786 **W** hotelominternational.business.site **Rooms** 20 **Tariff** ₹2,464-4,130 +breakfast **Facilities** internet, TV

Nimmu House

Location Mani Bhadra Road **Cell** 09152762547 **W** nimmu house.in **Rooms** 10 **Tariff** ₹1,000-3,000 **Facilities** Restaurant, internet, parking, TV

ON KUDLE BEACH

Gokarna International Beach Resort

Location Near Uma Maheshwar Temple, Kudle Beach **Tel** 257843 **Cell** 08884741005 **Rooms** 39 **Tariff** ₹2,800-3,500 **Facilities** Restaurant, Ayurvedic massage

Kudle Beach View Resort & Spa

Location 365, Kudle Beach **Tel** 256056/9 **Cell** 081309 67666 **W** kudlebeachview.com **Rooms** 16 **Tariff** ₹5,500-8,700 + breakfast **Facilities** Restaurants, swimming pool, Ayurvedic massage centre, yoga studio, internet, TV

ON OM BEACH

Namaste Café
Location Om Beach **Tel** 257141 **Cell** 09886466565 **W** namastegokarna.com **Rooms** 25 **Tariff** ₹1,000-4,000; TE **Facilities** Restaurant

Paradise Holiday Cottages

Location Kudle Beach Road Om Beach **Tel** 257943 **Cell** 09060649490 **W** paradise holidaycottages.com **Rooms** 8 **Tariff** ₹1,500-2,400 **Facilities** Meals on request, internet

SwaSvara Resort

Location Donibail, Om Beach **Cell** 09513320363 **W** cghearth.com **Rooms** 24 villas **Tariff** ₹76,000 +meals for 3N/ 4D **Facilities** Restaurants, Ayurveda centre, yoga, swimming pool, internet, birding **Kochi**



Reservations Tel 0484-4261751 **Cell** 0974407009

IN KUMTA STD 08386

Nirvana Nature

Location 70B, Nirvana Beach Road Hubbanageri/ Kagal village **Cell** 07742735052 **W** nirvananature.com **Rooms** 10 **Tariff** ₹999 **Facilities** Restaurant, room service

IN YANA STD 08388

Shree Sai Riverview

Jungle Resort

Location 38 kms from Yana, Ramanuguli, Ankola Tal **Tel** 276874 **Cell** 09591631900 **W** sairesorts.in **Rooms** 14 **Tariff** ₹2,800 + meals, some water activities, pp **Facilities** Speed boat rides, water scooter, rock climbing, trekking

HALEBID-BELUR STD 08177

Mayura Shanthala **KSTDC**

Location Opp Hoysala Aishwarya Temple **Tel** 2732224 **Cell** 08970654600 **W** kstcd.co **Rooms** 5 **Tariff** ₹999-1,900 **Facilities** Restaurant, guide arranged, room service, TV

IN BELUR STD 08177

Mayura Velapuri **KSTDC**

Location Near KG Circle Temple Road **Tel** 222209 **Cell** 08970650026 **W** kstcd.co **Rooms** 14, dorms 2 (20 beds each) **Tariff** ₹1,500-3,500; TE, dorm ₹4,000; **TE Facilities** Restaurant, bar, TV

Sumukha Residency

Location Opp Govt Hospital Temple Road **Tel** 222181 **Rooms** 27, dorms 2 (5 bed) **Tariff** ₹750-850 dorm ₹1,000 **Facilities** Basic accommodation, attached bath, TV

Vishnu Regency

Location Near Chenna Kesava Temple, Kempe Gowda Road **Tel** 223011 **Cell** 09448655546 **W** vishnu regency.in **Rooms** 20 **Tariff** ₹800-1,200 **Facilities** Veg restaurant, travel help, TV

HAMPI/ HOSPET STD 08394

Hampi's Boulders Resort

Location Narayanpet Bandiharapur Post, Koppal Dist **Cell** 09448034202 **W** hampisboulders.com **Rooms** 16 cottages **Tariff** ₹7,691-17,972 + breakfast **Facilities** Nature walks, trekking, safaris

Hyatt Place Hampi

Location Vidyanagar Township, Toranagallu, Bellary **Tel** 08395-661234 **W** hyatt.com **Rooms** 115 **Tariff** ₹4,037-9,000 +breakfast; **TE Facilities** Restaurant, bar, pool, spa, gym

Rahul Guest House

Location Opp Govt Bus Stand, PO Hampi **Tel** 241648 **Cell** 09449349768 **Rooms** 2 **Tariff** ₹800-1,000 **Facilities** Travel help, room service, TV

Uramma Cultural Residency

Location Anegundi Village **Cell** 09448284658 **W** uramma heritagehomes.com **Rooms** 7 **Tariff** ₹3,200-4,500 + breakfast **Facilities** Dining area, Internet

IN ANEGUNDI STD 08533

Hotel Sarvesh

Location Near Bus Stand Gangavathi, Dist Koppal **Tel** 230912 **Cell** 09480488308 **W** kishkindaheritage.com **Rooms** 30 **Tariff** ₹616-1,970 +breakfast; **TE Facilities** Restaurant, bar, internet, TV

Kishkinda Heritage Resort

Location Near Broken Bridge Cross, Sanapur, Anegundi Gangavathi Taluk **Tel** 287037 **Cell** 09449144167 **W** kishkinda heritage.com **Rooms** 29 **Tariff** ₹3,400-5,600 **Facilities** Restaurant, bar, waterpark, internet

IN HOSPET STD 08394

Hotel Hampi International

Location Station Road Hospet **Tel** 222067-222070 **Cell** 09234316111 **W** hotel hampiiinternational.com **Rooms** 54 **Tariff** ₹2,500-7,000 +breakfast; **TE Facilities** Restaurant, bar, internet, room service, TV

Hotel Malligi

Location Near Laxmi Talkies Jambunatha Road, Hospet **Tel** 228101-08 **W** malligihotels.com **Rooms** 160 **Tariff** ₹2,800-3,600 **Facilities** Restaurants, bar, swimming pool, gym, spa

IN KAMALAPURA STD 08394

Clarks Inn Hampi

Location HPC Road, Opp ASI Museum, Kamalapura **Tel** 241245 **W** clarksinn.in **Rooms** 38 **Tariff** ₹4,000 +breakfast; **TE Facilities** Restaurant, Internet

Evolve Back Kamalapura Palace Hampi

Location Hallikere Village Kamalapura Post **Cell** 083942 94700 **W** evolveback.com **Rooms** 40 **Tariff** ₹39,000-59,000 + two meals **Facilities** Restaurants, pool, spa, internet

Hotel Mayura

Bhuvaneshwari **KSTDC**
Location Opp petrol pump Kamalapura, Hospet-Gangawati Road **Tel** 241574 **Cell**

08970650025 **W** kstcd.co **Rooms** 30, dorms 6 (10 beds) **Tariff** ₹2,464-5,300 **Facilities** Restaurant, internet, TV

Heritage Resort Hampi

Location 48/ C & 4B Hosamalapanagudi **Cell** 09845602838 **W** indoasia-hotels.com **Rooms** 40 **Tariff** ₹6,600-11,930 + breakfast; **TE Facilities** Restaurant, pool, games, spa **Bengaluru Reservations Tel** 080-42019557

IN VIJAYANAGARA STD 08394

Hotel Mayura Vijayanagara

Location Opp Govardhan Garden Tungabhadra Dam Ballari, via Hospet **Tel** 259270 **Cell** 08970650002 **W** kstcd.co **Rooms** 20 **Tariff** ₹999-1,500 + breakfast; **TE Facilities** Restaurant, beer bar, internet

IN VIRUPAPURA GADDA STD 08533

Shanthi Guest House

Location Virupapura Gadda **Tel** 287038 **Cell** 09449260162 **W** shanthihampi.com **Rooms** 24 **Tariff** ₹1,624-2,100 **Facilities** Restaurant, travel help, internet, room service

The Goan Corner

Location Virupapura Gaddi Hampi Island **Tel** 287002/ 94 (both ringing) **Cell** 094482 12621 **W** thegoancorner.wordpress.com **Rooms** dorm **Tariff** On request **Facilities** Restaurant, crash mats for Bouldering on rent per day, transportation organized

HASSAN STD 08172

Hotel Hassan Ashok

Location Opp DC office, PB No. 121, BM Road **Tel** 268734-36 **Cell** 08884454900 **W** hassanashok.com **Rooms** 37 **Tariff** ₹5,900-14,720 + breakfast; **TE Facilities** Restaurant, bar, pool, internet, spa

Hoysala Village Resort

Location Survey No 357 Handikere Village, JH Kere PO, Belur Road **Bengaluru Reservations Tel** 080-22340166 **Cell** 09591077400 **W** hoysalavillageresorts.com **Rooms** 59 **Tariff** ₹13,500-19,000 + meals **Facilities** Restaurant, bar, pool, spa

Mallige Residency

Location 266, High School Field Road, RK Puram

Tel 260332 **W** malligeresidency.com **Rooms** 42 **Tariff** ₹2,100-2,650 + breakfast; **TE Facilities** Veg restaurant, TV

Southern Star Hassan

Location Near Guru Theatre BM Road **Tel** 251816-17 **W** hotelsouthernstar.com **Rooms** 47 **Tariff** ₹3,000-5,000 **Facilities** Restaurant, internet

HONNEMARDU STD 08183

The Adventurers

Location In the forest, Honnemardu, Sagar Tal **Rooms** tents (12-15 pax) **Tariff** ₹4,000 + meals, activities pp/ 2D **Facilities** trekking, canoeing, coracle rides **Bengaluru Reservations Cell** 09448485508 **Note:** Foam mats are provided for sleeping

HORANADU STD 08263

Bhadra Nivasa Lodge

Location Near the temple **W** shriketrahorandu.com **Rooms** 150 **Tariff** ₹500-3,000 **Facilities** Lodging only, attached bath, hot water, TV **Reservations Tel** 08263-269615 **Cell** 09845704614



HULI VANA

Huli Vana Rainforest Retreat
Location Survey No 23 Hodchalli, Hanbal Hobli Sakleshpur Tal **W** hulivana.com **Rooms** 2 villas (6-7 people each) **Tariff** ₹3,500 + meals pp **Facilities** Dining area, mini library, nature walks, trekking **Bengaluru Reservations** Cell 09108671755 **TIP** Dome tents (Oct-May), with meals and sleeping bags. **Tariff** ₹2,500 + meals pp

JOG FALLS STD 08186

Hotel Mayura Gerusoppa
Location Opp the falls, Jog Falls, Sagar Taluk, Shimoga Dist **Cell** 09480595732 **W** kstdc.co **Rooms** 10, dorm 1 (10 beds) **Tariff** ₹2,358-4,500, dorm bed ₹300 **Facilities** Restaurant, internet, hot water, TV

Sharavathi Adventure Camp, Jog **JLR**

Location 6 kms from Jog Falls, Kargal-Jog Falls, Sagar Tal **Tel** 213399 **Cell** 09449599784 **W** junglelodges.com **Rooms** 18 cottages **Tariff** ₹4,000 **Facilities** Nature walks, treks, boating, kayaking

Stay@Matthuga Homely Retreat

Location Near the falls, BH Road, Talavata **Cell** 09880799975 **W** matthuga.in **Rooms** 28 **Tariff** ₹2,400-3,800 **Facilities** Veg restaurant, swimming pool, games, trekking,

KABINI STD 08228

Evolve Back Kuruba Safari Lodge
Location Bheeramballi Village and Post, HD Kote Taluk **Bengaluru Reservations** Tel

080-25127000, 46184444 **W** evolveback.com **Rooms** 12 jacuzzi huts, 21 pool huts, 4 pool reserves **Tariff** ₹30,600-36,900+meals, nature activities **Facilities** Restaurant, bar, pool, spacoracle rides, boat/vehicle safari, nature walks

Kabini River Lodge **JLR**

Location Karapura, PO Nissana Belthur, HD Kote Taluk **Cell** 09449599754 **Bengaluru Reservations** Tel 080-40554055 **W** junglelodges.com **Rooms** 15, cottages 10, tented cottages 6, dorm 1 (10 bedded) **Tariff** ₹8,885-15,694 + meals, 1 boat safari, 1 jungle safari pp, dorm ₹5,095-6,501 + meals, 1 boat safari pp **Facilities** Restaurant, safaris, coracle boat ride, Ayurvedic massage

The Bison Resort

Location Gundathur, N Belathur PO Kabini, HD Kote Taluk **W** thebisonresort.com **Rooms** 12 tents, 2 rustic machans, 1 suite cottage **Tariff** ₹12,004-23,790 +meals, 1 coracle boat ride, small trek to the tribal village **Facilities** Swimming pool, trekking, bird-watching, fishing, boating **Bengaluru Reservations** Tel 080-41278708 **Cell** 7022155961

The Serai Kabini

Location Adjacent to Kabini River Lodge, Survey No 60/ 1 Nishana, Karapura Village **Cell** 09945602305 **W** theserai.in **Rooms** 20 **Tariff** ₹41,900-64,480 + meals/ 2N; TE **Facilities** Restaurant, pool, gym, safari, boat rides, nature walks, kayaking, **Bengaluru Reservations** Tel 080-40012200 **Cell** 09900063960

KALABURAGI STD 08472

Hotel Citrus Gulburga
Location Gold Hub Mall, 3rd Floor, Opp KBN Hospital **Tel** 241919 **Cell** 09606070807 **W** citrushotels.com **Rooms** 25 **Tariff** ₹4,000-6,500 +breakfast; TE **Facilities** Restaurant, bar, internet, room service, TV

Hotel Kadamba Residency

Location Jawali Complex Supermarket **Tel** 241111-15 **Rooms** 18 **Tariff** ₹600-1,600; TE **Facilities** Restaurant, TV

KAKKABE STD 08272

Chingaara Estate Guest House
Location PO Yavakapadi Kabbinakad **Tel** 238633 **Cell** 09591821339 **W** chingaara.com **Rooms** 9 **Tariff** ₹1,700-2,700 **Facilities** Dining hall, birdwatching, nature walks, sightseeing, trekking, tennis

Coorg Coffee Country

Location Palace Road Kakkabe **Cell** 09686401945 **W** coorgcoffeecountry.com **Rooms** 16 **Tariff** ₹3,200-4,250 + meals **Facilities** Dining hut, trekking, estate walks, games, campfire, hot water

Honey Valley

Location Amidst plantations Yavakapadi PO **Tel** 238339 **Cell** 08197444939 **W** honeyvalleyindia.in **Rooms** 18 **Tariff** 650-3,950 **Facilities** Dining hall, nature walks, trekking

Palace Estate

Location Kakkabe Post **Cell** 09483198446 **W** palaceestate.co.in **Rooms** 8 **Tariff** ₹3,600-4,300 + breakfast, dinner and

tea/ coffee **Facilities** In house restaurant, food on request

The Tamara Coorg YOGA

Location Kabbinakad Estate Napoklu Nad, Yavakapadi Village **Tel** 238000 **Cell** 09739833939 **W** thetamara.com **Rooms** 56 cottages **Tariff** ₹14,000-18,000 + breakfast; TE **Facilities** Restaurant, bar, internet, meditation, yoga, Rudraksh tour **Bengaluru Reservations** **Tel** 080-71077700

KARWAR STD 08382

Bhadra Hotel
Location Near Kali Bridge NH17, Uttar Kannada Dist **Tel** 225212-13 **Rooms** 38 **Tariff** ₹3,500-5,500; TE **Facilities** Restaurant, internet

Citrus Hotels Karwar

Location Near Canara Bank Kaikani Road **Tel** 237000 **W** citrushotels.com **Rooms** 31 **Tariff** ₹2,800-3,200 +breakfast; TE **Facilities** Restaurant, bar, spa, internet, room service, TV

Hotel West End

Location 604, Dr Pikle Road **Tel** 227712 **Cell** 09482403730 **W** hotelwestendkarwar.com

Rooms 25 **Tariff** ₹2,200-3,000 +breakfast; TE **Facilities** Restaurant, pool, gym, internet

IN DEVBAGH STD 08382
Devbagh Beach Resort **JLR**

Location Devbagh Beach Tariwada, Post Shivagad **Tel** 221603 **Cell** 09449599778 **W** junglodelges.com **Rooms** 20 cottages **Tariff** ₹6,850 + meals, boat rides, forest entry charges pp **Facilities** Dining area, water sports, nature walks, fisherman village visit, **TIP** Online booking

ON KURUMGAD ISLAND
Cintacor Island Resort

Location Kurumgad Island **Cell** 09487533640 **W** cintacor islandresort.com **Rooms** 15 cottages **Tariff** ₹12,500-20,000 +breakfast, boat transfer; TE **Facilities** Restaurants, pool, spa, fishing, dolphin sighting cruise **Ooty Reservations** **Tel** 0423-2244000

IN SADASHIVGAD

Sterling Karwar – Resorts
Location NH66, Toll Naka Sadashivgad **Tel** 266000 **Cell** 09003302727 **W** sterling holidays.com **Rooms** 50 **Tariff**

₹6,000-8,000 + breakfast; TE **Facilities** Restaurant, pool

IN HANKON STD 08382
Camp Riveredge Paradise

Location Near Kali River Hankon, Karwar Dist **W** campparadise.info **Rooms** 4 cabins, 10 tents, dorm (10-12 pax) **Tariff** ₹3,000 + meals, trekking, kayaking, canoeing pp, tents & dorm ₹2,000 + meals, trekking, kayaking/canoeing pp **Facilities** Rafting, kayaking, canoeing, tubing for children, river crossing, rock climbing **Note:** Cabins have attached bath, Tents have detached toilets (12-15 m from tent)

KEMMANNAGUNDI STD 08261

Dattatri Bhavan
Location On a hill **Rooms** 4 **Tariff** ₹2,000; TE **Facilities** Restaurant, trekking, hot water **Reservations** See *Horticulture Dept Guest House* below

Horticultural Department Guest House

Location In the Forest **Rooms** 30, dorms 3 (6 bedded) **Tariff** ₹1,500-2,000; TE, dorm ₹2,000 **Facilities** Restaurant, trekking, sightseeing, hot water



Kemmannagundi Reservations Special Officer, Krishna Rajendra Hill Station, PO Kemmannagundi **Bengaluru Reservations** Director of Horticulture, Lalbagh Bengaluru **Tel** 080-26579231

Ozone Valley
Location 5 km from town Denton Khan Estate **Cell** 09448971207, 09448727717 **W** ozonevalley.com **Rooms** 4 cottages **Tariff** ₹2,000, + meals pp **Facilities** Restaurant, pool, trekking, nature walks, TV

Raj Bhavan
Location On a hill, Krishna Rajendra Hill Station **Rooms** 8 **Tariff** ₹1,500-2,500; TE **Facilities** Canteen, attached bath, hot water **Reservations** See *Horticulture Dept Guest House above*
TIP Mainly for VIP Guests

The Last Resort
Location Glendale Farms Ballavara, Kallathipura PO Tarikere Taluk **Cell** 078290 26617 **W** thelastresort.in **Rooms** 20 **Tariff** ₹2,300 + meals pp **Facilities** Dining hall, power back-up

Valley of the Birds
Location GM Farm, Thanigebyle PO, Tarikere Taluk **Cell** 09481193152 **W** valleyofbirds.in **Rooms** 2 **Tariff** ₹2,500 per person + meals **Facilities** Dining hall, power back-up

KOLLUR STD 08254
Bhagirathi Tourist Home
Location Gopalkrishna Temple Road **Tel** 258290 **Cell** 094492 69420 **W** bhagirathitouristhome.com **Rooms** 27

Tariff ₹650-1,700 **Facilities** Veg restaurant, dining hall
Hotel Mookambika Palace
Location Car Street, Kundapur **Tel** 258560 **Cell** 09916682455 **W** mookambikahotels.com **Rooms** 36 **Tariff** ₹2,239-4,000 + breakfast **Facilities** Veg restaurant, internet

Jyothis Residency
Location 27/ 5, Beside Sri Mookambika Temple, Kundapura **Tel** 258552 **Cell** 094807 21366 **W** jyothisresidency.com **Rooms** 72 **Tariff** ₹2,799-5,000 + breakfast **Facilities** Veg restaurant, internet, room service

KUDREMUKH STD 08263
Bhagawathi Nature Camp
Location Inside Kudremukh NP, Mudigere, Chikamagalur **Cell** 09449597875 **W** jungle lodges.com **Rooms** 12 cottages, dorms 1 (14 bedded) **Tariff** ₹1,711-2,242, dorm ₹1,475 + meals, forest entry charges, activities **Facilities** Restaurant **Bengaluru Reservations** **Tel** 080-40554055

IN KALASA
Bynekaadu
Location Kalasa, Mudigere Taluk **Cell** 09741521777 **W** bynekaadu.com **Rooms** 12 dorms **Tariff** ₹2,800-3,500 + meals; TE **pp** **Facilities** Restaurant, trekking, bonfire

The Silent Valley Resort
Location Thodlu, Kalasa-Kudremukh Road **Tel** 08263-09008444436 **W** greenplanetresorts.com **Rooms** 30, dorms 1 (30 bedded) **Tariff** ₹4,400-6,000, dorm ₹1,750+meals; TE **pp**

Facilities Restaurant, swimming pool, hot water
KUKKE SUBRAMANYA STD 08257
Anugraha Lodge
Location Kukke Subramanya, Kadaba Taluk **Cell** 09448549671, 08453502400 **W** anugraha-kukke.in **Rooms** 50 **Tariff** ₹700-1,600 **Facilities** Lodging, attached bath

Hotel Mayura Residency
Location Kukke Subramanya, Kadaba Taluk, Near Kashikatte **Tel** 281336 **Cell** 09152776665 **Rooms** 44 **Tariff** ₹970-2,454 **Facilities** Lodging, attached bath

Hotel Seshanaag Aashraya
Location Near the Temple Car Street, opp new KSRTC bus stand **Tel** 281215/ 19 **Cell** 09448091295 **W** sheshnaag aashraya.com **Rooms** 30 **Tariff** ₹800-1,792 **Facilities** Lodging, attached baths

Temple Guesthouse
Location Near Kukke Subramanya temple **Tel** 08257-281265/ 224 **W** karnatakaone.gov.in **Facilities** Basic accommodation, food provided in the temple as Prasadam In Karthikeya Kumarakrupa **Rooms** 66 **Tariff** ₹50/ sgl; ₹100/ dbl; ₹160/ 3pax In Skandakrupa **Rooms** 42 **Tariff** ₹100/ dbl

LAKKAVALLI STD 08261
River Tern Lodge **JLR**
Location Behind Ranganathaswamy Temple, Bhadra Project **Cell** 09449599780 **W** jungle lodges.com **Rooms** 15 cottages, 8 log huts **Tariff** ₹7,400 + meals, jeep safari to Bhadra TR, forest entry charge pp

Facilities Dining area, water sports, wildlife film, boating **Bengaluru Reservations** **Tel** 080-40554055 **Cell** 09449599769

MADIKERI STD 08272
Cauvery Nisargadhama
Location 2 kms from Kushalnagar on an island off Madikeri-Mysuru Road **Tel** 228305 **Rooms** 10 cottages, 1 dorm (10 bedded) **Tariff** ₹1,000 dorm ₹2,400 **Facilities** Meals on request **Reservations** Deputy Conservator of Forests, Madikeri

Club Mahindra Kodagu Valley **SPA** **TREKS** **RAFTING**
Location Galibeedu Road Kalakeri Nidugane Village **Tel** 221114 **W** clubmahindra.com **Rooms** 220 **Tariff** ₹12,000-20,000 **Facilities** Restaurant, bar, pool, activity centre, spa, gym, rafting, trekking, internet

Coorg International
Location Near St Joseph's Convent, Convent Road **Tel** 228071-72 **W** indoasiahotels.com **Rooms** 27 **Tariff** ₹4,800-11,500 + breakfast; TE **Facilities** Restaurant, bar, swim-

ming pool, Ayurvedic massage, **Bengaluru Reservations** **Tel** 080-25232329, 42019557

Golden Mist Plantation & Resorts **TREKS**
Location 10 km from Madikeri Village Galibeedu **Tel** 265629 **Cell** 09448903670 **W** goldenmist.net **Rooms** 3, cottages 2 **Tariff** ₹3,000 + all meals pp **Facilities** Home-cooked meals, trekking, nature walk, plantation tour

Heritage Resort **AYURVEDA**
Location Valley-facing, 50/ 3 1st Monnangeri Village Galibeedu **Tel** 265794-96 **W** indoasia-hotels.com **Rooms** 32 **Tariff** ₹12,600-14,000 + all meals **Facilities** Restaurant, bar, pool, Ayurveda centre **Bengaluru Reservations** See *Coorg International alongside*

Mayura Valley View **KSTDC**
Location Opp All India Radio Raja's Seat **Tel** 228387 **Cell** 08970650028 **W** kstdc.co **Rooms** 35, dorms 1 (10 bedded) **Tariff** ₹3,068-6,136, dorm ₹8,000-10,000 **Facilities** Restaurant, bar, TV

Polaycad Bungalow
Location Mumad Road Ammathi **Tel** 298272 **Cell** 09448606066 **W** polaycad.com **Rooms** 4 **Tariff** ₹3,750-5,250 + breakfast **Facilities** Food on request — Coorg cuisine only

Rainforest Retreat **ECO-RETREAT TENTS**
Location Mojo Plantation Kaloor, PO Galibeedu **Tel** 265636/ 38 **Cell** 09481501623 **W** rainforestour.com **Rooms** 4 cottages, 3 tents **Tariff** ₹3,000-4,000, tents ₹2,000+breakfast; TE) **Facilities** Dining hall, organic vegetables and fruits, solar lighting, birding

Shanti Estate Bungalow
Location Main Road, 2.5 km from Madikeri **Tel** 223690 **Cell** 09845505200 **Rooms** 1 bungalow, 1 cottage, 1 old style house **Tariff** ₹500-1,000 pp Credit Cards NA **Facilities** Food on request, sightseeing arranged, hot water
TIP An old style house with a bath outside

MANGALURU STD 0824
Ginger Mangalore
Location Near Infosys, Kottara



Chowki Junction **Tel** 6663333
W gingerhotels.com **Rooms** 79
Tariff ₹2,855 +breakfast **Facilities** Restaurant, gym, internet

Hotel Poonja International
Location KS Rao Road, Hampankatta **Tel** 2440171-86
Cell 09141955527 **W** hotelpoonjainternational.com **Rooms** 104 **Tariff** ₹1,699-5,999 +breakfast; **TE Facilities** Restaurant, bar, beauty parlour

Phalguni River Lodge **JLR**
Location 10 kms from Mangaluru, Pilikula Nisargadhama, Moodushedda Village **Tel** 2263633 **Cell** 094831 12769 **W** junglodelogues.com **Rooms** 21 **Tariff** ₹2,500-4,500 +breakfast **Facilities** Kitchen, bar, Agurvedic massage centre, visit to artisan's village/ biological park

Summer Sands Beach Resort
Location Near beach, Chotamangalore, Ulial **Tel** 2467690-92 **Reservations** 08861373737 **W** summersands.in **Rooms** 90 **Tariff** ₹6,270-23,260 +breakfast, dinner **Facilities** Restaurant, bar, pool, spa, club house

The Gateway Hotel Old Port Road
Location Near State Bank of India Circle, Old Port Road **Tel** 6660420 **W** tajhotels.com **Rooms** 96 **Tariff** ₹5,500-18,000 +breakfast; **TE Facilities** Restaurant, internet,

The Ocean Pearl
Location Navabharath Circle KS Rao Road, Kodailbail **Tel** 2413800 **W** theoceanpearl.in

Rooms 84 **Tariff** ₹7,000-7,499 +breakfast; **TE Facilities** Restaurant, gym, spa, internet, TV

The Verda Saffron
Location GHS Road, Near Janatha Bazaar Hampankatta **Tel** 4255542 **Cell** 091080 25400 **W** theverda.com **Rooms** 42 **Tariff** ₹4,500-7,400 +breakfast; **TE Facilities** Restaurant, internet, TV

MYSURU STD 0821
Country Inn & Suites by Radisson Mysore
Location Plot No 345/ A Hebbal Industrial Area, Near Infosys Campus **Tel** 6642000 **W** countryinns.com **Rooms** 130 **Tariff** ₹4,000-7,500 +breakfast; **TE Facilities** Restaurant, bar, swimming pool, gym, spa

Ginger Mysore
Location Near Nazarabad Police Station, Nazarabad Mohalla, Vasant Mahal Road **Tel** 6633333 **W** gingerhotels.com **Rooms** 98 **Tariff** ₹2,399 +breakfast; **TE Facilities** Restaurant, gym, spa, travel desk, internet

Hotel Mayura Hoysala **KSTDC**
Location 2, Jhansi Laxmi Bai Road **Tel** 2426160 **Cell** 08970650014 **W** kstdc.co **Rooms** 50, dorms 2 (16 and 20 bedded) **Tariff** ₹1,100-2,300; **TE** dorm ₹3,200-4,000; **TE Facilities** Restaurant, bar, travel help, internet parking, TV

Hotel MB International Palace Side
Location 43/ A, BN Road Hardinge Circle, Bengaluru-

Nilgiri Road, Opp Woodland Theatre **Cell** 09739786223 **W** hotelmbinternational.co **Rooms** 73 **Tariff** ₹2,000-4,000 + breakfast **Facilities** Restaurant, travel help, internet, room service, TV

Hotel Southern Star Mysuru
Location 14-15, Vinobha Road **Cell** 09448067750 **W** hotelssouthernstar.com **Rooms** 105 **Tariff** ₹6,000-12,000 + breakfast; **TE Facilities** Restaurant, bar, swimming pool, gym, spa, travel desk

Lalitha Mahal Palace Hotel **HERITAGE**
Location Lalithmahal Nagar Siddhartha Layout **Tel** 2526100, 2470222 **W** lalithamahalpalace.co.in **Rooms** 54 **Tariff** ₹4,000-35,000 +breakfast; **TE Facilities** Restaurant, bar, swimming pool, room service, TV, travel help

The Green Hotel **ECO-HERITAGE**
Location Chittaranjan Palace 2270 Vinobha Road, Jayalakshmpuram **Tel** 4255000-02 **W** greenhotelindia.com **Rooms** 31 **Tariff** ₹2440-6,797 +breakfast; **TE Facilities** Restaurant, bar, bakery, coffee shop, travel help

The Windflower Spa & Resorts
Location Behind Mysuru Race Course, Maharana Pratap Road, Nazarbad **Tel** 2522500 **W** thewindflower.com **Rooms** 39 **Tariff** ₹7,970-25,240 +breakfast **Facilities** Restaurant, bar, swimming pool, gym, spa, yoga, travel help, room service, laundry, car rental, parking, TV

IN BRINDAVAN GARDENS STD 08236
Mayura Kauvery **KSTDC**
Location Inside KRS (Brindavan Gardens), Krishna Raja Sagara, Srirangapatna Taluk, Dist Mandya **Tel** 297189 **Cell** 08970650022 **W** kstdc.co **Rooms** 20 **Tariff** ₹1,300-2,800 **Facilities** Restaurant, beer bar

Royal Orchid Brindavan Gardens
Location Facing KRS, Krishna Raja Sagara **Cell** 099020 00153 **W** royalorchidhotels.com **Rooms** 24 **Tariff** ₹6,000-9,500 +breakfast; **TE Facilities** Restaurant, café, bar, swimming pool, spa, Internet

POLIBETTA STD 08272
Ama Plantation # Trails Coorgs
Location Pollibetta Estate Tata coffee ltd, Pollibetta Main Road **Tel** 080-235707613 **W** amaplantationtrails.com **Rooms** 6 bungalows **Tariff** ₹7,500-15,000 + breakfast activities **Facilities** Meals provided, plantation tour, guided coffee/ tea picking, birdwatching **Bengaluru Reservations** **Tel** 080-23570761

TIP Formerly The Bungalows by Tata Coffee, now under the Taj Management

The Cottage
Location Near Tata Coffee Head Office, Polibetta, South Coorg **Cell** 09886314567 **W** thecottagecoorg.com **Rooms** 3 **Tariff** ₹3,500 + breakfast **Facilities** Food on request, estate tour, sight-seeing organised, bonfire

The Porcupine Castle
Location Hanchikad, Pollibetta **W** porcupinecastle.com **Rooms** 23 chalets, 2 tree house, 2 wood houses **Tariff** ₹5,500-7,500 + breakfast; **TE Facilities** Restaurant, swimming pool, plantation tours, nature walks, room service, travel help **Bengaluru Reservations** **Tel** 080-41660805 **Cell** 09008466808

IN HUDIKERI
Glenlorna Estate
Location Hudikeri Post Hudikeri Bengaluru **Tel** 080-23570761 **Cell** 09916073156 **W** amaplantationtrails.com **Rooms** 5 (15 pax) **Tariff** ₹7,000-10,000 + breakfast,

activities; **TE**, full bungalow 25,000-30,000 + breakfast, activities; **TE Facilities** Home cooked food with a butler service, cycling, tea factory visit, nature walks **TIP** With Tata Coffee Ltd

IN MADAPUR STD 08276
Bel Home
Location Bellarimotte Estate Madapura PO, North Coorg **Cell** 094488 73543, 08762061135 **W** belhome.co **Rooms** 2, wooden cabins 2 **Tariff** 3,500 + breakfast **Facilities** Dining hall, food provided on request, estate tour, bird-watching, trekking

Coorg River Valley
Location Chandra-prasad Estate, Nandimotte, Madapura PO, North Coorg **Cell** 09448108154, 08762033604 **W** coorgrivervalley.in **Rooms** 10 **Tariff** ₹2,000-2,500 + breakfast **Facilities** Food provided, pool, estate tour, birdwatching, trekking, fishing

SHIVANASAMUDRAM STD 08231
Georgia Sunshine Village Homestay
Location On Shimshapura



Road, PO Hebbani, Malavalli Tal, Dist Mandya **Tel** 247646, 247783 **Cell** 09845754661, 09448110660 **W** georgiasun shine.com **Rooms** 10 **Tariff** ₹7,780-14,310 +meals, fun fishing, bonfire and morning trek **Facilities** Dining area, swimming pool

Hotel Mayura Bharachukki Shivanasamudra **KSTDC**
Location Kollegola Tal Chamaraj Nagar **Cell** 08970650053 **W** kstdc.co **Rooms** 4 **Tariff** ₹1,443-1,700 **Facilities** Restaurant, parking

SIDDAPUR STD 08274

Alath-Cad Estate Bungalow
Location Amidst coffee plantations, Ammathi, via Virajpet **Tel** 252190, 252589 **Cell** 09482980873, 094829 80735 **W** alathcad coorg.com, alathcadhomestay.com **Rooms** 11 **Tariff** ₹2,500-4,000 +breakfast **Facilities** Home-cooked Coorg meals, plantation tour, internet

Coorg Golf Links
Location Spring Valley Annexe, Bittangala **Tel** 298009 **Cell** 09740260346 **W** coorggolfinks.in **Rooms** 6 **Tariff** ₹3,000; TE **Facilities** Restaurant, recreation room

Evolve Back Resort
Location In a plantation, PO Karadigodu, Siddapur **Tel** 258481-84 **W** evolveback.com **Rooms** 32 villas, 26 cottages, 5 bungalows **Tariff** ₹33,000-70,000 + meals, nature activities, guided spice tour, forest trek **Facilities** Restaurants, café, treks, guided plantation tour, spa **Bengaluru**

Reservations Evolve Back Resort **Tel** 080-4618444

Sand Banks

Location Polycad Estate Ammathi, South Coorg **Cell** 09448588150, 0944976853 **W** bestcoorghomestay.com **Rooms** 4 **Tariff** ₹3,500-4,000 +breakfast **Facilities** Treks, games, trip to coffee estate, sightseeing tours, boating, birdwatching, fishing, bonfire, pick-up/ drop arranged. Dinner charges ₹375/400

SRAVANABELAGOLA STD 08176

Hotel Raghu
Location Main Road **Tel** 257238 **Cell** 09844068852 **Rooms** 17 **Tariff** ₹600-1,000 **Facilities** Veg restaurant, internet

SDJMIMC

Location Bahubali Matt Dharmashala, Channarayana-patna Road **Tel** 257258, 257131 **Cell** 07892471068 **Rooms** 22 guest houses, 2 dharamshalas, 4 halls **Tariff** ₹200-900, hall ₹650-850 **Facilities** Lodging only, meals in the temple

SDK Residency

Location CR Patna Road, Opp Yatri Nivas **Tel** 276544 **Cell** 09448220514, 09152651808 **Rooms** 12 **Tariff** ₹1,200-2,200 **Facilities** Lodging, room service, attached bath

SRINGERI STD 08265

Bhide Homestay
Location Bharathinagara Menase, Opp Rajiv Gandhi Sanskrit University Chikamagalur-Sringeri Road

Tel 250210 **Cell** 09448503400 **Rooms** 18 **Tariff** ₹1,500-2,000 **Facilities** Kitchen, meals on request, kids play area, parking, bath attached

Guru Prasad Lodge

Location Opp Sringeri Mutt Subhash Street **Tel** 250556 **Cell** 09743030556 **Rooms** 10 **W** sringerilodgeguruprasad.blogspot.com **Tariff** ₹700-1,500 **Facilities** Restaurant pure veg, attached bath

Sringeri Mutt

Location Sringeri **Tel** 250123, 250594, 250192 **Rooms** 500 **Tariff** ₹100-1,000 **Facilities** lodging, attached bath

SRIRANGAPATNA STD 08236

Amblee Holiday Resorts
Location 17, SH17, Mysuru Bengaluru Highway **Cell** 09341912221, 09845002665 **W** ambleeresort.in **Rooms** 35 **Tariff** ₹1,500-3,000; TE **Facilities** Restaurant, pool, boating, fishing, kids play area

Cauvery Sannidhi for Indian Culture

Location 69, Bommuru Agrahara Village, Paschima Vahini Circle, Off Mysuru-Bengaluru Highway **Cell** 07899478876, 08277689011 **W** mysorecauveysannidhi.com **Rooms** 10 **Tariffs** ₹3,000-3,500 **Facilities** Kitchen, veg homecooked food, dining hall

Hotel Mayura Riverview

KSTDC
Location Mysuru Road **Tel** 297114 **Cell** 08970650004/ 99 **W** kstdc.co **Rooms** 25 **Tariff** ₹2,000-5,000 **Facilities** Restaurant, bar, kids play area

The Cute-A Village Resort
Location Bommuru Agrahara Road, Srirangapatna KRS Road, near Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary, Mandya **Cell** 09980858100, 08088237045, 08088237046 **W** thecute.in **Rooms** 20 **Tariff** ₹3,240-9,655 **Facilities** Restaurant, swimming pool, spa

THIRTHAHALLI STD 08181

Bananki Homestay
Location Devangi Post, Thirthahalli Tal **Cell** 094814 90555, 09448320047 **W** bananki homestay.com **Rooms** 7 **Tariff** ₹2,250-2,500 +meals pp **Facilities** Dining area, plantation walks, games, cycling

Dodda Mane Homestay

Location Kasturi Akka, Main Road, Dodda Mane, Agumba **Cell** 09448603343 **Rooms** 2, dorms 1 (5 bedded) **Tariff** On request **Facilities** Meals provided, common bath

Hingaara – The Nature Stay

Location Guddekeri Post **Cell** 09481534099, 09900602529 **W** hingaara.com **Rooms** 4, dorm 1 **Tariff** ₹1,950+meals, activities pp **Facilities** Dining

area, trekking, plantation tour, rope activities, village tour, games, fishing, common bath

Kolavara Heritage Homestay

Location Thirthahalli **Tel** 254722, 202210 **Cell** 094803 30033 **W** kolavaraheritage.com **Rooms** 7 **Tariff** ₹2,750 +meals pp **Facilities** Dining area, indoor games, nature walks, plantation tours, bird watching

Kuppali Homestay

Location Thirthahalli **Rooms** 4, dorms 1 **Tariff** ₹1,450 +meals pp **Facilities** Dining area, sightseeing arranged, bonfire **Bengaluru Reservations** **Cell** 09900005858

Sakrebyle Elephant Camp

Location Sakrebyle, Gajanoor **Cell** 09480887180 **W** junglelodges.com **Rooms** 6 wooden cottages (Chalets), 3 tented cottages, 1 dorm (10 bedded) **Tariff** ₹1,800-2,065, per person +meals, elephant interaction, trekking, forest entry charges pp, dorm bed ₹1,600 + meals, elephant interaction, trekking, forest entry charges pp **Facilities** Dining area, trekking,

birdwatching, herbal garden tour **Bengaluru Reservations** **Tel** 080-40554055

UDUPI STD 0820

Samanvay Boutique Hotel

Location Near Govinda Kalyana Mantapa, Kinnimulki Main Road **Tel** 2500250 **Cell** 09448011111 **W** samanvay udupi.com **Rooms** 48 **Tariff** ₹4,366-6,000 + breakfast **Facilities** Veg Restaurants, coffee shop, temple tours arranged, foot reflexology, TV

Treebo Trend Vijaya Grand

Location Old Post Office Road, Opp Kalpana Theater, Diana Circle **Tel** 2531141 **W** treebo.com **Rooms** 30 **Tariff** ₹1,800-4,200 + breakfast **Facilities** Internet, room service, TV

IN MANIPAL STD 0820

Country Inn & Suites by Radisson
Location Rajathadri Road Vidyarathna, KA Nagar **Tel** 2701600 **W** countryinns.com **Rooms** 54 **Tariff** ₹3,800-15,000 + breakfast; TE **Facilities** Restaurant,



swimming pool, gym, spa, travel help, room service, TV

Hotel Madhuvan Serai

Location Near Smriti Bhavan Upendra Nagar, Near Tiger Circle **Tel** 2571667-68 **Cell** 07829901250-51 **W** hotel madhuvanserai.com **Rooms** 47 **Tariff** ₹3,000-7,000 (breakfast; TE **Facilities** Separate veg and non-veg Restaurants, bar, spa, internet **TIP** Handicap Friendly – folding wheelchair available

Satkar Paradise

Location End Point Road Near Crumbz Bakery, 2nd Cross, Vidyaratna Nagar **Tel** 4291000, 4292000 **W** satkargroup.com **Rooms** 36 Apartments **Tariff** ₹2,200; TE **Facilities** Service apartment with AC, fridge, microwave, stove, utensils

IN MALPE STD 0820

Malpe Sea Front Cottages

Location Malpe Beach **Cell** 07847800800 **W** malpeseafront cottage.com **Rooms** 8 cottages **Tariff** ₹2,000-7,000 **Facilities** Separate veg and non-veg Restaurants, swimming pool, spa, water sports

Paradise Isle Beach Resort

Location Malpe Beach **Cell** 07847800800 **W** theparadise isle.com **Rooms** 72 **Tariff** ₹3,500-7,000 **Facilities** Veg and non veg restaurants, bar, coffee shop, spa, water sports

IN KAUP STD 0820

Hotel Mayura

Location NH-66, Uliargoli **Cell** 09448952921 **Rooms** 15 **Tariff** ₹750-1,600; TE **Facilities**

Restaurant, bar, room service, parking, hot water, TV

Palm Grove Resort

Location Fisheries Road Yermal Bada **Cell** 074067 22269 **Rooms** 13 **Tariff** ₹2,000-2,500 + breakfast **Facilities** Meals on prior request, dining area

IN KUNDAPURA

STD 08254

Coqueiros Beach Cottages

Location Hale Alive, Beach Road, Near Kinara Hotel Koteswara **Cell** 081239 11781, 09591682258 **W** coqueirosbeachcottages.com **Rooms** 10 cottages, 2 dorms **Tariff** ₹3,500-4,500 +breakfast; TE dorm (non-AC, 8 bedded) ₹800/ bed, AC (8 bedded) ₹6,000; TE **Facilities** Restaurant, bar, spa, games, water sports, fishing, cycling

UVA Meridian Bay

Resort & Spa

Location Prafulla Enclave Halady Road, Koteswara **Cell** 09449606060, 09483303030 **W** meridianbayresort.com **Rooms** 49 **Tariff** ₹3,000-8,000 + breakfast; TE **Facilities** Restaurant, pool, gym, spa, salon, mini library, travel help, internet, room service, TV

IN BASRUR STD 08254

Soans Island

Location CS Road, Basrur Village, 6km from Kundapura **Tel** 231683 **Cell** 09448120826 **W** soans.com **Rooms** 5 **Tariff** ₹6,000 +2 meals, boat trip up & down **Facilities** Dining area, birdwatching, fishing, nature walks, cycling **TIP** Fixed Menu

IN TRASI/ MARAVANTHE STD 08254

Sagar Kinara Beach Resort

Location NH-17, Trasi-Maravanthe Beach **Cell** 09448724861, 09886884046 **Rooms** 6 **Tariff** ₹800-1,000 **Facilities** Travel help, room service, TV

Sunlight Beach Resort

Location Opposite Trasi Beach **Cell** 09880346029 **Rooms** 11 **Tariff** ₹2,300 **Facilities** Basic accommodation, room service

IN KARKALA STD 08258

Hotel Prakash

Location SH-37, Near Anantha Shayana Temple **Tel** 234981/ 2 **Cell** 09632826562 **W** hotelprakashkarkala.com **Rooms** 25 **Tariff** ₹800-1,960 **Facilities** Restaurant, TV

Hotel Suhag

Location Gopal Towers Complex, Main Road **Tel** 231991/ 2 **Rooms** 21 **Tariff** ₹800-1,400 **Facilities** Veg Restaurant, room service, TV

Seethanadi Nature Camp

Location Hebri, Taluk Karkala Udupi **Cell** 09449599758 **W** junglelodges.com **Rooms** 7 cottages, dorms 1 (10 bedded) **Tariff** ₹1,534-2095, dorms ₹1,298 **Facilities** Restaurant **Bengaluru Reservations Tel** 080-40554055

VIJAYAPUR/ BIJAPUR STD 08352

KSTDC Mayura Adil Shahi Annexe KSTDC

Location Station Road, Near Ambedkar Stadium **Tel** 250 401 **Cell** 08970650031 **W** kstcd.co **Rooms** 4

Tariff ₹1,680 Facilities

Separate veg and non-veg restaurants

Sabala Heritage Home

Location Sabala Campus, NH 13, Near Ganesh Nagar Vijayapura Bypass **Cell** 09448118204 **W** sabala heritagehome.org **Rooms** 11 rooms (7 AC/ 4 non-AC) **Tariff** 1,600-4,000 + breakfast **Facilities** Veg cuisine (non-veg on request), Internet, Banjara Village visit, cultural activities **TIP** Runs an NGO called Sabala for empowerment of local women

Shashing Clarks Inn

Location NH-52, Solapur Bypass Road **Tel** 260344, 260444 **Cell** 08151869044, 07568258599 **W** clarksinn.in **Rooms** 30 rooms **Tariff** ₹2,000-5,000; TE **Facilities** Multicuisine restaurants, Coffee Shop, lounge/ bar, garden, pool, gym, spa

VIRAJPET STD 08274

37, Malabar Road Homestay **Location** Anugraha, 37/ 12B Malabar Road **Cell** 09886827885 **Rooms** 3 **Tariff**

₹2,000-3,000 **Facilities** Home cooked Kodava cuisine, attached bath

Sithara Homestay

Location Sidapur Road Virajpet **Tel** 256310 **Cell** 09740190812 **W** sithara.org **Rooms** 4 **Tariff** ₹4,000 **Facilities** Club house, trekking, plantation tours, birdwatching

IN BITTANGALA

Ambatty Greens

Location Bittangala, Coorg Golf links **Tel** 298004, 298012 **Cell** 090087 85744 **W** ambattygreens.com **Rooms** 24 **Tariff** ₹10,880-12,160 + breakfast **Facilities** Restaurant, bar, swimming pool, library, recreation room

Coorg Golf Links

Location Spring Valley Annexe, Bittangala **Tel** 298009 **Cell** 09740260346 **W** coorggolfinks.in **Rooms** 6 **Tariff** ₹3,000; TE **Facilities** Restaurant, recreation room

IN KADANGA

The Windchimes Retreat

Location Manjunatha Estate

Heggala Road, Heggala Virajpet **Cell** 09686976113, 09513331333 **W** thewindchimesretreat.in **Rooms** 8 **Tariff** ₹4,500-7,500 + breakfast; TE **Facilities** Food on request

IN GONIKOPPAL

Naadmane Homestay

Location Hebbale Estate Devarapura, Gonikoppal **Cell** 09886637259, 09900090141 **W** naadmanehomestay.com **Rooms** 6 **Tariff** ₹1,200/ person + breakfast pp **Facilities** Home cooked Kodava cuisine

IN KARADA

Club Mahindra Virajpet

Location Palangala Village Karada Post **Tel** 260700, 269999 **W** clubmahindra.com **Rooms** 174 **Tariff** ₹8,500 -15,000+breakfast **Facilities** Restaurant, bar, coffee lounge, swimming pool, spa, gym

Keemal Kad Estate

Guesthouse

Location Karada Village **Cell** 09980666766 **Rooms** 4 **Tariff** ₹1,750+breakfast pp **Facilities** In house restaurant with Coorgi cuisine



Photo Credits

Front Cover

SHUTTERSTOCK:

Virupaksha temple surrounded by the old ruins of the ancient city of Hampi

Back Cover

GETTY IMAGES

Top: Jog Falls, Shimoga

SHUTTERSTOCK

Bottom: A majestic tiger at Kabini

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Page 3, Nandi Bull at Chamundeshwari Temple

SHUTTERSTOCK

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Page 49, Below left: Sala fighting the Lion, the emblem of the Hoysala Empire - Chennakeshava Temple

Page 57, Top right: Giant Malabar Squirrel at Nagarahole National Park

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Page 66-67, Beautiful decoated ceiling and pillars of the Ambavilasa Hall, Mysore Palace

Page 70, Aerial view of Vidhana Soudha and High Court (foreground) buildings

Page 198-199, Aerial shot of sea and river in Udupi

Page 262-263, Jog Falls at Sharavati River

Page 310-311, The exuberant cascades of Jog Falls

Page 328-329, The remains of a Shiva temple of the Chalukya period atop the north fort at Badami

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Page 24: Udupi restaurants such as MTR have a fascinating origin in the worship of Krishna

Courtesy Images

WIKIPEDIA

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Route Planners

Graphics: Rajesh KG