



# Andhra Pradesh

Aside from tens of millions of pilgrims, not many people make the trip to Andhra Pradesh. But Andhra's a place with subtle charms, quiet traditions and a long history of spiritual scholarship and religious harmony. The state is 95% Hindu, but you wouldn't know it in the capital's Old City, where Islamic monuments and the call of the muezzin are more ubiquitous than the garlanded, twinkling tableaux of Ganesh. The city's rich Islamic history announces itself in Hyderabad's huge, lavish mosques, its opulent palaces and the stately Qutb Shahi tombs – but also, more softly, in a tiny spiral staircase in the Charminar and in the sounds of Urdu floating through the air.

Meanwhile, in the city's north, a 17.5m-high statue of the Buddha announces another Andhran history: the region was an international centre of Buddhist thought for several hundred years from the 3rd century BC. Andhras were practising the dharma from the time of the Buddha (rumour has it that he even once visited). Today ruins of stupas and monasteries defy impermanence around the state, especially at Amaravathi and Nagarjunakonda.

Travelling here is like a treasure hunt: the jewels have to be earned. The stunning Eastern Ghats near Visakhapatnam only emerge after hours on a broad-gauge line. A family workshop filled with exquisite traditional paintings appears after a meander through Sri Kalahasti. And the most famous wait of all, through a long, holy maze filled with pilgrims at Tirumala, is rewarded with a glimpse of Lord Venkateshwara, who, if you're lucky, will grant you a wish.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Buy an old drum and more bangles than you need while soaking up centuries-old ambience at Hyderabad's colourful **Laad Bazaar** (p940)
- Receive loving kindness from Buddha statues in **Hyderabad** (p943), **Nagarjunakonda** (p949) and **Amaravathi** (p955)
- Enjoy the beauty of the spectacular Eastern Ghats as your train chugs through the mountains to the **Araku Valley** (p954)
- Find devotion you didn't know you had for Lord Venkateshwara and mingle with the pilgrims at **Tirumala** (p956) as they shed their hair for their deity
- Picnic atop the ruins of the 16th-century **Golconda Fort** (p942) and then wander in and out of the **royal tombs of the Qutb Shahi kings** (p942) in Hyderabad



## History

From the 2nd century BC, the Satavahana empire, also known as the Andhras, reigned throughout the Deccan plateau. It evolved from the Andhra people, whose presence in southern India may date back to 1000 BC. The Buddha's teaching took root here early on, and in the 3rd century BC the Andhras fully embraced it, building huge edifices in its honour. In the coming centuries, the Andhras would develop a flourishing civilisation that extended from the west to the east coasts of South India.

From the 7th to the 10th century the Chalukyas ruled the area, establishing their Dravidian style of architecture, especially along the coast. The Chalukya and Chola dynasties

### FAST FACTS

- Population: 75.7 million
- Area: 276,754 sq km
- Capital: Hyderabad
- Main languages: Telugu, Urdu, Hindi
- When to go: October to February

merged in the 11th century to be overthrown by the Kakatiyas, who introduced pillared temples into South Indian religious architecture. The Vijayanagars then rose to become one of the most powerful empires in India.



By the 16th century the Islamic Qutb Shahi dynasty held the city of Hyderabad, but in 1687 was supplanted by Aurangzeb's Mughal empire. In the 18th century the post-Mughal rulers in Hyderabad, known as nizams, retained relative control as the British and French vied for trade, though their power gradually weakened. The region became part of independent India in 1947, and in 1956 the state of Andhra Pradesh, an amalgamation of Telugu-speaking areas, plus the predominantly Urdu-speaking capital, was created.

## Information

### ACCOMMODATION

Most hotels charge a 5% 'luxury' tax, which is not included in the prices quoted in this chapter. All hotels in this chapter have 24-hour checkout unless otherwise stated.

## HYDERABAD & SECUNDERABAD

☎ 040 / pop 5.5 million / elev 600m

Hyderabad and Secunderabad, City of Pearls, was once the seat of the powerful Qutb Shahi and Asaf Jahi dynasties. Today Hyderabad's west side is, with Bengaluru (Bangalore), the seat of India's mighty software dynasty; 'Cyberabad' generates jobs, wealth and posh lounges like she was born to do it. Opulence, it would seem, is in this city's genes.

Across town from all this sheen is Cyberabad's gorgeous and aged grandmother, the old Muslim quarter, with centuries-old Islamic monuments and even older charms. In fact, the whole city is laced with architectural gems (just like the garments of Asaf Jahi princesses threaded with gold): ornate tombs, mosques, palaces and homes from the past are tucked away, faded and

### FESTIVALS IN ANDHRA PRADESH

**Sankranti** (Jan; statewide) This important Telugu festival marks the end of harvest season. Kite-flying competitions are held, women decorate their doorsteps with colourful *kolams* (or *rangolis* – rice-flour designs), and men decorate cattle with bells and fresh horn paint.

**Industrial Exhibition** (Jan/Feb; Hyderabad, above) A huge exhibition with traders from around India displaying their wares, accompanied by a colourful, bustling fair.

**Deccan Festival** (Feb; Hyderabad, above) Pays tribute to Deccan culture. Urdu *mushairas* (poetry readings) are held, along with Qawwali (Sufi devotional music) and other local music and dance performances.

**Shivaratri** (Feb/Mar; statewide) During a blue moon, this festival celebrates Shiva with all-night chanting, prayers and fasting. Hordes of pilgrims descend on the auspicious Shiva temples at Sri Kalahasti, Amaravathi and Lepakshi.

**Muharram** (Feb/Mar; Hyderabad, above) Muharram commemorates the martyrdom of Mohammed's grandson for 14 days in Hyderabad. Shiites wear black in mourning, and throngs gather at Mecca Masjid.

**Ugadi** (Mar; statewide) Telugu new year is celebrated with *pujas* (offerings or prayers), mango-leaf *toranas* (architraves) over doorways, and sweets and special foods.

**Mahankali Jatra** (Jun/Jul; statewide) A festival honouring Kali, with colourful processions in which devotees convey *bonalu* (pots of food offerings) to the deity. Secunderabad's Mahankali Temple goes wild.

**Mrigasira** (Jun/Jul; Hyderabad, above) Also known as Mrugam, this event marks the start of the monsoon with a feast of local fish and a fascinating medical treatment administered to thousands of asthma sufferers. The treatment, more than 150 years old, involves swallowing live fish that have consumed a herbal remedy. It's believed that the remedy was revealed by a sage to the ancestors of the physicians who now dispense it.

**Batakamma** (Sep/Oct; Hyderabad, above & Warangal, p951) Women and girls in the north of the state participate in this celebration of womanhood. There's dancing and feasting, and the goddess Batakamma is worshipped in the form of elaborate flower arrangements that women make and set adrift on rivers.

**Brahmotsavam** (Sep/Oct; Tirumala, p956) Initiated by Brahma himself, the nine-day festival sees the Venkateshwara temple adorned in decorations. Special *pujas* and colourful chariot processions are a feature of the festivities, and it's considered an auspicious time for *darshan* (deity viewing).

**Pandit Motiram-Maniram Sangeet Samaroh** (Nov; Hyderabad, above) This four-day music festival, named for two renowned classical musicians, celebrates Hindustani music.

**Lumbini Festival** (2nd Fri in Dec; Hyderabad, above & Nagarjunakonda, p949) The three-day Lumbini Festival honours Andhra's Buddhist heritage.

**Visakha Utsav** (Dec/Jan; Visakhapatnam, p952) A celebration of all things Visakhapatnam, with classical and folk dance and music performances; some events are staged on the beach.

enchanting, in corners all over town. Keep your eyes open.

Once an important centre of Islamic culture, Hyderabad is southern India's counterpart to the Mughal splendour of Delhi, Agra and Fatehpur Sikri, and a sizeable percentage of Hyderabad's population is Muslim. The city gracefully combines Hindu and Islamic traditions – while a strategically placed 17.5m-high Buddha looks on.

You're likely to be taken aback by the chilled-out kindness of Hyderabadis, and many find the city delightful: lots to see and do with almost no hassle.

## History

Hyderabad owes its existence to a water shortage at Golconda in the late 16th century. The reigning Qutb Shahis were forced to relocate, and so Mohammed Quli and the royal family abandoned Golconda Fort for the banks of the Musi River. The new city of Hyderabad was established, with the brand-new Charminar as its centrepiece.

In 1687 the city was overrun by the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, and subsequent rulers of Hyderabad were viceroys installed by the Mughal administration in Delhi.

In 1724 the Hyderabad viceroy, Asaf Jah, took advantage of waning Mughal power and declared Hyderabad an independent state with himself as leader. The dynasty of the nizams of Hyderabad began, and the traditions of Islam flourished. Hyderabad became a focus for the arts, culture and learning, and the centre of Islamic India. Its abundance of rare gems and minerals – the world-famous Kohinoor diamond is from here – furnished the nizams with enormous wealth. (Get a copy of William Dalrymple's *White Mughals* for a fascinating portrait of the city at this time.)

When Independence came in 1947, the then nizam of Hyderabad, Osman Ali Khan, considered amalgamation with Pakistan – and then opted for sovereignty. Tensions between Muslims and Hindus increased, however, and military intervention saw Hyderabad join the Indian union in 1948.

## Orientation

Hyderabad has four distinct areas. The Old Town by the Musi River has bustling bazaars and important landmarks, including the Charminar.

North of the river is Mahatma Gandhi (Imlibun) bus station, Hyderabad (Nampally) station and the main post office. Abid Rd runs through the Abids district, a good budget-accommodation area.

Further north, beyond the Hussain Sagar, lies Secunderabad, with its Jubilee bus station and huge train station, an important stop for many regional trains.

Jubilee Hills and Banjara Hills, west of Hussain Sagar, are where the well heeled – and their restaurants, shops and lounges – reside, and further west is Cyberabad's capital, Hitec (Hyderabad Information Technology Engineering Consulting) City.

## Information

### BOOKSHOPS

On Sunday, second-hand books are sold on Abid Rd; a few gems nestle among the computer books.

**AA Husain & Co** (Map p941; ☎ 23203724; Abid Rd; ☎ 10.30am-8.30pm Mon-Sat) Tonnes of Indian and foreign authors.

**MR Book Centre** (Map p941; ☎ 23205684; Abid Rd; ☎ 10am-9pm Mon-Sat, 11am-10pm Sun) New and secondhand novels; magazines from back home.

**Walden** (Map p939; ☎ 23413434; Greenlands Rd, Begumpet; ☎ 9am-9pm) Hyderabad's megastore.

### CULTURAL CENTRES & LIBRARIES

**Alliance Française** (Map p939; ☎ 27700734; www.afindia.org; St No 16, West Marredpally, Secunderabad; ☎ 9am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat)

**British Library** (Map p941; ☎ 23483333; www.britishcouncilonline.org; Secretariat Rd; ☎ 11am-7pm Tue-Sun) Membership costs Rs 1000.

**State Library** (Map p939; ☎ 24600107; Maulvi Allaudin Rd; ☎ 8am-8pm Fri-Wed) Beautiful old building with more than three million books.

### INTERNET ACCESS

**Railtel Cyber Express** (Map p941; ☎ 64512724; Nampally Station; per hr Rs 23; ☎ 6am-10pm)

**Reliance Web World** (Map p941; ☎ 30609991; MPM Mall, Abids Circle; per 3 hr Rs 100; ☎ 9.30am-10pm)

### LEFT LUGGAGE

All three train stations, as well as Mahatma Gandhi bus station, have left-luggage facilities, charging Rs 10 per bag per day.

### MEDIA

Good 'what's on' guides include *Channel 6*, *GO Hyderabad* and *Primetime Prism*. The

## HYDERABAD &amp; SECUNDERABAD

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D

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Apollo Pharmacy	4	D5
Care Hospital	5	B4
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## SIGHTS &amp; ACTIVITIES

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## SLEEPING

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Bottles & Chimney	35	C2
Café Coffee Day	36	B4
Liquids	37	B4
Mocha	38	A3
Touch	39	A3

## ENTERTAINMENT

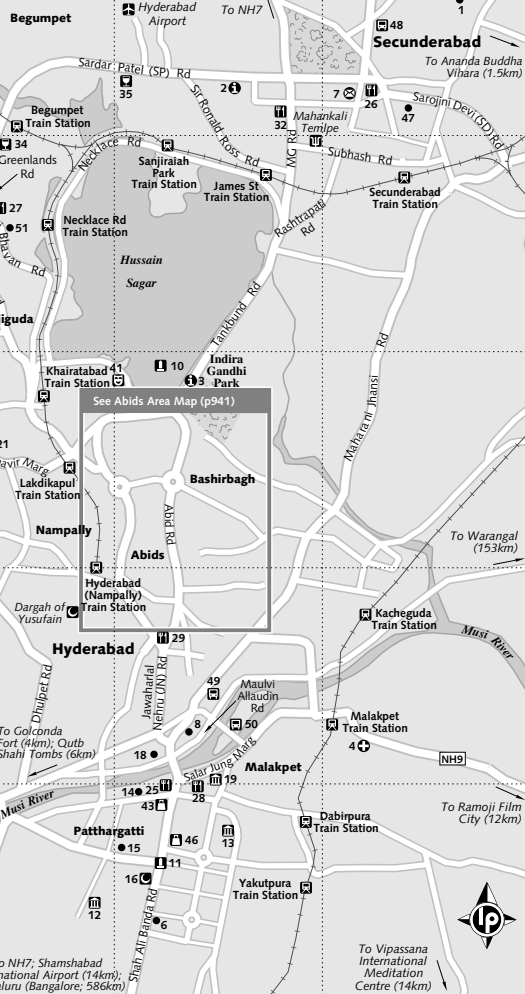
Hyderabad Film Club	40	A3
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Afreen Suits & Saris	43	C6
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juiciest is **Wow! Hyderabad** ([www.wowhyderabad.com](http://www.wowhyderabad.com); Rs 20). The *Deccan Chronicle* is a good local paper; its *Hyderabad Chronicle* insert has info on happenings.

### MEDICAL SERVICES

**Apollo Pharmacy** (Map p939; ☎ 23433609; NH9, Malakpet; ☎ 24hr) Rs 200 to deliver.

**Care Hospital** Banjara Hills (Map p939; ☎ 66668888; Rd No 1); Nampally (Map p941; ☎ 66517777; Mukarramjahi Rd) Reputable hospital with 24-hour pharmacy.

### MONEY

The banks offer the best currency-exchange rates here. State Bank of India and Thomas Cook change travellers cheques with no commission. ATMs are everywhere.

**Indian Overseas Bank** (Map p941; ☎ 24756655; Bank St; ☎ 10.30am-3pm Mon-Fri)

**State Bank of India** (Map p941; ☎ 23231986; HACA Bhavan, AG's Office Rd; ☎ 10.30am-4pm Mon-Fri)

**Thomas Cook** (Map p941; ☎ 23296521; Nasir Arcade, AG's Office Rd; ☎ 9.30am-6pm Mon-Sat)

### POST

**Post office** (☎ 8am-8.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun) Secunderabad (Map p939; Rashtrapati Rd); Abids (Map p941; Abids Circle)

### TOURIST INFORMATION

**Andhra Pradesh Tourism** (APTDC; [www.aptdc.in](http://www.aptdc.in)) Hyderabad (Map p939; ☎ 23453036; Tankbund Rd; ☎ 7am-8.30pm); Secunderabad (Map p939; ☎ 27893100; Yatri Nivas Hotel, SP Rd; ☎ 7am-8.30pm) Organises tours.

**Department of Tourism** (Government of Andhra Pradesh; Map p939; ☎ 23454550; [www.aptourism.in](http://www.aptourism.in); Tankbund Rd; ☎ 6am-9pm) Tours, too.

**Indiatourism** (Government of India; Map p941; ☎ 23261360; Netaji Bhavan, Himayatnagar Rd; ☎ 9.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 2pm Sat) Most helpful.

### Sights

#### CHARMINAR & BAZAARS

Hyderabad's principal landmark, the **Charminar** (Four Towers; Map p939; Indian/foreigner Rs 5/100; ☎ 9am-5.30pm) was built by Mohammed Quli Qutb Shah in 1591 to commemorate the founding of Hyderabad and the end of epidemics caused by Golconda's water shortage. Standing 56m high and 30m wide, the dramatic four-column structure has four arches facing the cardinal points. Minarets sit atop each column. The 2nd floor, home to Hyderabad's oldest mosque, and upper columns are not usually open to the public, but you can try your luck

with the man with the key. The structure is illuminated from 7pm to 9pm.

West of the Charminar, the incredible **Laad Bazaar** (Map p939) is the perfect place to get lost. It has everything from the finest perfumes, fabrics and jewels to musical instruments, second-hand saris and kitchen implements. You can see artisans creating everything from jewellery and scented oils to large pots and musical instruments. The lanes around the Charminar also form the centre of India's pearl trade. Some great deals can be had – if you know your stuff.

### SALAR JUNG MUSEUM

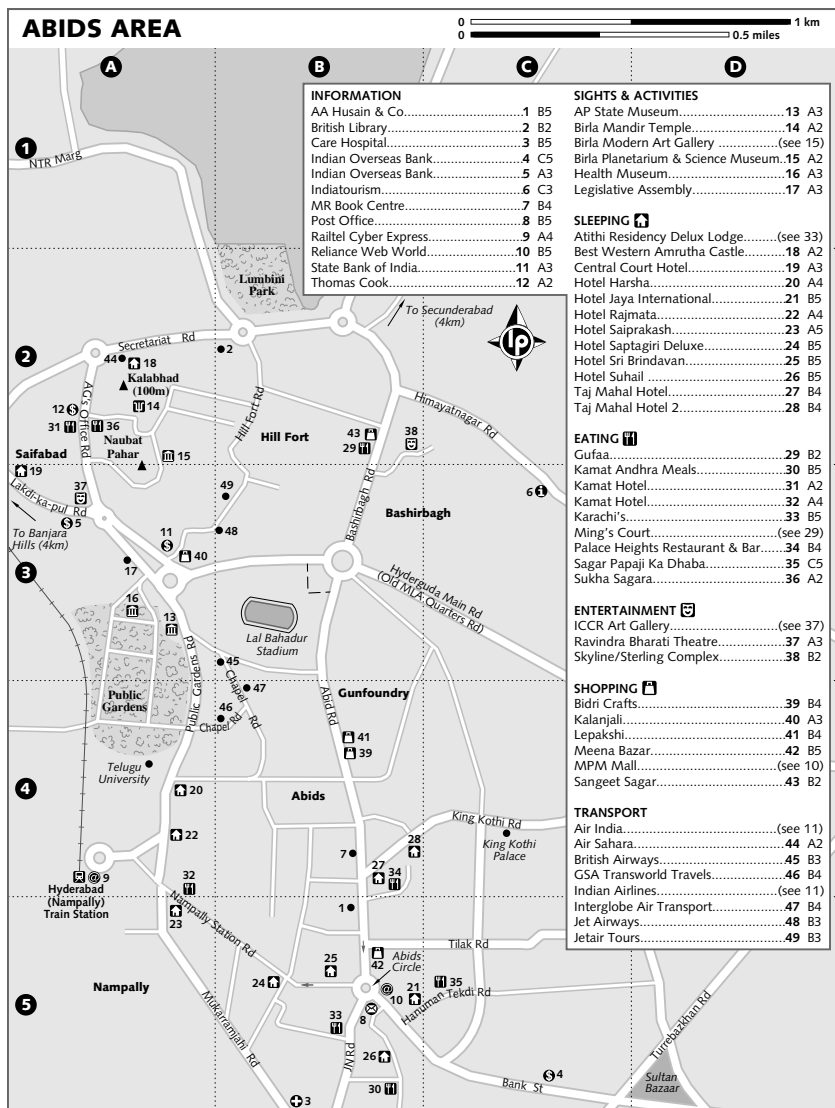
The huge collection of the **Salar Jung Museum** (Map p939; ☎ 24523211; Salar Jung Marg; Indian/foreigner Rs 10/150; ☎ 10am-5pm Sat-Thu), dating back to the 1st century, was put together by Mir Yusaf Ali Khan (Salar Jung III), the grand vizier of the seventh nizam, Osman Ali Khan (r 1910–49). The 35,000 exhibits from every corner of the world include sculptures, wood carvings, devotional objects, Persian miniature paintings, illuminated manuscripts, weaponry and more than 50,000 books. The impressive nizams' jewellery collection is sometimes on special exhibit. Cameras are not allowed.

Avoid visiting the museum on Sunday when it's bedlam. From any of the bus stands in the Abids area, take bus 7, which stops at the nearby Musi River bridge.

Not far west of the bridge, facing each other across the river, are the spectacular **High Court** (Map p939) and **Osmania General Hospital** (Map p939) buildings, built by the seventh nizam in the Indo-Saracenic style.

### CHOWMAHALLA PALACE

In their latest act of architectural showmanship, the nizam family has sponsored a restoration of this dazzling **palace** (Khilwat; Map p939; ☎ 24522032; [www.chowmahalla.com](http://www.chowmahalla.com); Indian/foreigner Rs 25/150; ☎ 11am-5pm Sat-Thu) – or, technically, four (*char*) palaces (*mahalla*). Begun in the late 18th century, it was expanded over the next 100 years, absorbing Persian, Indo-Saracenic, Rajasthani and European styles. The Khilwat Mubarak compound includes the magnificent durbar hall, where nizams held ceremonies under 19 enormous chandeliers of Belgian crystal. Today the hall houses exhibitions of photos, arms and clothing. Hung with curtains, the balcony over the main hall once served as seating for the family's women, who attended all durbars in purdah.



### HEH THE NIZAM'S MUSEUM

The 16th-century Purani Haveli was home of the sixth nizam, Fath Jang Mahbub Ali Khan (r 1869–1911), rumoured to have never worn the same thing twice. His 72m-long, two-storey wardrobe of Burmese teak is on display at this **museum** (Purani Haveli; Map p939; adult/student Rs 65/15; ☎ 10am–5pm Sat–Thu). Also on exhibit,

in the palace's former servants' quarters, are personal effects of the seventh nizam and gifts from the Silver Jubilee celebration of his reign. The pieces are unbelievably lavish and include some exquisite artwork. The museum's guides do an excellent job putting it all in context.

The rest of Purani Haveli is now a school, but you can wander around the grounds and

peek in the administrative building, the nizam's former residence.

### GOLCONDA FORT

Although most of this 16th-century **fortress** (Map p942; ☎ 23513984; Indian/foreigner Rs 5/100; 🕒 10am-6pm) dates from the time of the Qutb Shah kings, its origins, as a mud fort, have been traced to the earlier reigns of the Yadavas and Kakatiyas.

Golconda had been the capital of the independent state of Telangana for nearly 80 years when Sultan Quli Qutb Shah abandoned the fort in 1590 and moved to the new city of Hyderabad.

In the 17th century, Mughal armies from Delhi were sent to the Golconda kingdom to enforce payment of tribute. Abul Hasan, last of the Qutb Shahi kings, held out at Golconda for eight months against Emperor Aurangzeb's massive army. The emperor finally succeeded with the aid of a teacher-insider.

It's easy to see how the Mughal army was nearly defeated. The citadel is built on a granite hill 120m high and surrounded by

crenellated ramparts constructed from large masonry blocks. Outside the citadel there stands another crenellated rampart, with a perimeter of 11km, and yet another wall beyond this. The massive gates were studded with iron spikes to obstruct war elephants.

Survival within the fort was also attributable to water and sound. A series of concealed glazed earthen pipes ensured a reliable water supply, while the acoustics guaranteed that even the smallest sound from the Grand Portico would echo across the fort complex.

Knowledgeable guides around the entrance will ask Rs 250 for a 1½-hour tour and lose interest in any offer below Rs 150. You can usually find the *Guide to Golconda Fort & Qutb Shahi Tombs* (Rs 20) on sale here.

An autorickshaw from Abids costs around Rs 200 return, including waiting time. Mornings are best for peace and quiet.

A trippy **sound-and-light show** (admission Rs 50; 🕒 English version 6.30pm Nov-Feb, 7pm Mar-Oct) is also held here.

### TOMBS OF QUTB SHAHI KINGS

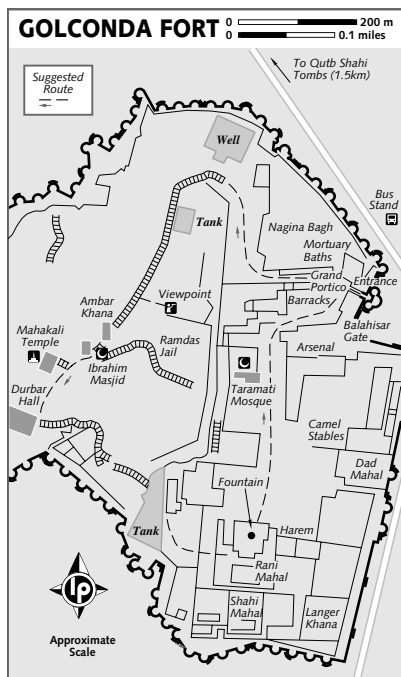
These graceful domed **tombs** (admission Rs 10, camera/video Rs 20/100; 🕒 9.30am-6pm) sit serenely in landscaped gardens about 1.5km northwest of Golconda Fort's Balahisar Gate. You could easily spend half a day here taking photos and wandering in and out of the mausoleums and various other structures. The upper level of Mohammed Quli's tomb, reached via a narrow staircase, has good views of the area. *The Qutb Shahi Tombs* (Rs 20) is sold at the ticket counter.

The tombs are an easy walk from the fort, but an autorickshaw ride shouldn't be more than Rs 20. Bus 80S also stops right outside.

### MECCA MASJID

Adjacent to the Charminar is the **Mecca Masjid** (Map p939; Shah Ali Banda Rd, Patthargatti; 🕒 9am-5pm), one of the world's largest mosques, with space for 10,000 worshippers. Women are not allowed inside.

Construction began in 1614, during Mohammed Quli Qutb Shah's reign, but the mosque wasn't finished until 1687, by which time the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb had annexed the Golconda kingdom. Several bricks embedded above the gate are made with soil from Mecca – hence the name. The colonnades and door arches, with their inscriptions from the Quran, are made from single slabs





of granite that were quarried 11km away and dragged here by a team of 1400 bullocks.

To the left of the mosque, an enclosure contains the tombs of Nizam Ali Khan and his successors. Guides here offer tours for around Rs 50.

### BUDDHA STATUE & HUSSAIN SAGAR

Hyderabad boasts one of the world's largest freestanding stone **Buddha statues** (Map p939), completed in 1990 after five years of work. However, when the 17.5m-high, 350-tonne monolith was being ferried to its place in the **Hussain Sagar** (Map p939), the barge sank. The statue languished underwater until being raised – undamaged – in 1992. It's now on a plinth in the middle of the lake.

Frequent **boats** (☎ 23455315; Rs 30; ⌚ 9am-9pm) make the 30-minute return trip to the statue from **Lumbini Park** (Map p941; admission Rs 5; ⌚ 9am-9pm), a pleasant place to enjoy Hyderabad's spectacular sunsets and the popular musical fountain. The Tankbund Rd promenade, which skirts the eastern shore of Hussain Sagar, has great views of the Buddha statue.

### AP STATE & HEALTH MUSEUMS

The recently renovated **AP State Museum** (Map p941; ☎ 23232267; Public Gardens Rd, Nampally; admission Rs 10, camera/video Rs 20/100; ⌚ 10.30am-4.30pm Sat-Thu) hosts a collection of important archaeological finds from the area, as well as a Buddhist sculpture gallery, with some relics of the Buddha and an exhibit on the Andhra's fascinating Buddhist history. The ever-expanding museum also has a Jain sculpture gallery, an exhibition of paintings by Pakistani painter AR Chughtai and an Egyptian mummy. The museum, like the gorgeous **Legislative Assembly building** down the road (both built by the seventh nizam), is floodlit at night.

Well worth a visit is the nearby **Health Museum** (admission free; ⌚ 10.30am-5pm Sat-Thu), where you'll see a bizarre collection of medical and public-health paraphernalia.

### NEHRU CENTENARY TRIBAL MUSEUM

Andhra Pradesh's 33 tribal groups, based mostly in the northeastern part of the state, comprise several million people. This **museum** (Map p939; ☎ 23391486, ext 306; Mahavir Marg, Masab Tank; admission free; ⌚ 10.30am-5pm Mon-Sat), run by the government's Tribal Welfare Department, exhibits photographs, dioramas

of village life, musical instruments and some exquisite Naikpod masks. It's basic, but you'll get a glimpse into the cultures of these fringe peoples. The library here has books on Indian anthropology, traditional medicine and sociology. The museum is across from Chacha Nehru Park.

### BIRLA MANDIR TEMPLE & PLANETARIUM

The **Birla Mandir Temple** (Map p941; ⌚ 7am-noon & 2-9pm), constructed of white Rajasthani marble in 1976, graces Kalabahad (Black Mountain), one of two rocky hills overlooking the southern end of Hussain Sagar. Dedicated to Lord Venkateshwara, the temple is a popular Hindu pilgrimage centre and affords excellent views over the city, especially at sunset. The religious library here is worth a visit (open 4pm to 8pm).

The **Birla Planetarium & Science Museum** (Map p941; ☎ 23235081; museum/planetarium Rs 17/20; ⌚ museum 10.30am-8pm, till 3pm Fri, planetarium shows 11.30am, 4pm, 6pm), as well as the **Birla Modern Art Gallery** (Map p941; admission Rs 10; ⌚ 10.30am-6pm), are on the hill adjacent to the temple.

### RAMOJI FILM CITY

Movie fans can't miss the four-hour tour of **Ramoji Film City** (☎ 23235678; www.ramojifilmcity.com; admission Rs 250; ⌚ 9.30am-5.30pm), an 800-hectare movie-making complex for Telugu, Tamil and Hindi films. This place has everything – dance routines, gaudy fountains, flimsy film sets – and the whole thing wraps up with a Wild West song-and-dance number. The 'Royal Package' (Rs 750) includes AC transport and lunch at a five-star hotel. Buses 205 and 206 from Koti Women's College, 100m northeast of Koti station, take an hour to get here.

### Activities

The Theravada **Ananda Buddha Vihara** (Map p939; ☎ 27733161; www.buddhavihara.in; Mahendra Hills; ⌚ 5.30am-12.30pm & 4-8.30pm) will eventually include a museum of Buddhist art and a library. At the time of writing, only the temple – on a hill with incredible views – was complete. Meditation sessions are held at 6am and 6pm, but monks and nuns are available anytime to give instruction or just chat about the tradition. Call to inquire about special programmes.

The centre is near the Amrita ashram; take East Maredpally Main Rd through Trimurthy Colony. An autorickshaw from Abids will cost around Rs 75.

## Courses

The **Vipassana International Meditation Centre** (Dhamma Khetta; ☎ 24240290; www.dhamma.org; Nagarjuna Sagar Rd, Kusumnagar) has intensive 10-day meditation courses at its peaceful grounds 20km outside the city. Apply by email or at the Hyderabad office (☎ 24732569). A shuttle runs to/from Hyderabad on the first and last day of courses.

## Tours

APTDC (see p940) conducts tours of the city (full day, Rs 230), Ramoji Film City (Rs 415), Nagarjuna Sagar (weekends only, Rs 360) and Tirupathi (two days, Rs 1600 AC). The evening city tour (Rs 155) takes in Hitec City, the botanic gardens and Golconda Fort's sound-and-light show, though you may spend much of it in traffic. All tours start from the Secunderabad office.

The Department of Tourism (p940) has daytime (Rs 125) and night-time (Rs 175) city tours by AC bus.

**Save the Rocks Society** (☎ 23552923; www.saverocks.org; 1236 Rd No 60, Jubilee Hills) organises monthly walks through the Andhran landscape and its surreal-looking boulders.

## Sleeping

Rooms tend to fill up, so call ahead.

## BUDGET

The best cheap hotels are in the Abids area between Abids Circle and Hyderabad train station. Many of the cheaper places seem to be filled with curious gents.

**Hotel Suhail** (Map p941; ☎ 24610299; Troop Bazaar; s/d/tr from Rs 200/375/395) Tucked away on an alley behind the main post office and the Grand Hotel, the Suhail is an excellent deal. Rooms are large and quiet and have balconies and constant hot water. Troop Bazaar is unlit at night, though; some readers find it sketchy.

**Hotel Sri Brindavan** (Map p941; ☎ 23203970; fax 23200204; Nampally Station Rd; s/d from Rs 350/450; 🚽) The curved balcony and fresh lemon-yellow paint give this well-ordered place a slight Art Deco feel. Few staff speak English, but rooms are tidy and compact, and AC rooms in the back are surprisingly peaceful. The parking lot even has trees.

**Atithi Residency Delux Lodge** (Map p941; ☎ 66848491; Mahaprabhu House, JN Rd; s/d from Rs 350/525; 🚽) The Atithi gets an A for effort. Rooms have soothing peach walls, door mouldings and 24-hour

hot water. There's also a travel 'desk', which is really just reception, but staff can help with train booking and car rental. Request a room at the back to avoid street noise.

**Hotel Saptagiri Deluxe** (Map p941; ☎ 24610333; Nampally Station Rd; r from Rs 450; 🚽) Women guests were spotted here – always a good sign. Set back from Nampally Station Rd, it's quiet, clean, bright and almost tasteful – a step up from the joints you usually find at this price. Rooms come with clean towels!

**Hotel Jaya International** (Map p941; ☎ 24752929; hoteljaya@sancharnet.in; Hanuman Tekdi Rd; s/d from Rs 495/595; 🚽) There's a reason that the Jaya always seems to be full of student groups: it's the best deal in town. Capacious, sunny rooms have arched balconies with good views, stained-glass lamps and scrubbed bathrooms. It's centrally located, too. But there definitely won't be a room for you if you don't book ahead.

**APTDC's paying-guest programme** (☎ 23450444) can help find you rooms in private homes for Rs 250 to Rs 600.

If you arrive late at Secunderabad train station, try the clean but noisy **retiring rooms** (dm from Rs 50, s/d from Rs 250/450; 🚽).

## MIDRANGE

**Taj Mahal Hotel** (Map p941; ☎ 40048484; fax 55827373; King Kothi Rd; s/d from Rs 550/750; 🚽) Taj number two is just east of – and second fiddle to – the original (see below). Big, spotless rooms always seem to have a fresh coat of paint. Reception is at the back of the parking lot, past the reception for Taj No 3.

**Hotel Rajmata** (Map p941; ☎ 66665555; fax 23204133; Public Gardens Rd; s/d Rs 590/690) The Rajmata is very professionally run – the folks at reception are great – and has a helpful travel desk. Rooms here vary; the better ones are big and bright, and since the place is set back from busy Public Gardens Rd, they're not too noisy. It's popular with families.

**Taj Mahal Hotel** (Map p941; ☎ 24758250; sundar taj@satyam.net.in; cnr Abid & King Kothi Rds; s/d with AC from Rs 800/1150; 🚽) This rambling heritage building has a magnificent exterior, plants peppered about, and some exceedingly charming rooms. Each is different so ask to see a few: the better ones have boudoirs, crystal-knobbed armoires and wood-beam ceilings. All are peaceful. Service is good, too.

**Atithi Guesthouse** (Map p939; ☎ 9246544051; www.atithiguesthouse.com; Rd No 13A, Happy Valley Rd, Banjara

Hills; s/d with AC incl breakfast Rs 1000/1500; 🏠) If you're more interested in the conveniences of home than being close to the action, take a room in one of Athidhi's three-bedroom serviced apartments, set on a tranquil lane in chichi Banjara Hills. Nearby food shops provide all you need to cook in the kitchen.

Also recommended:

**Yatri Nivas Hotel** (Map p939; 📞 23461847; www.amogh-india.com; SP Rd, Secunderabad; s/d with AC incl breakfast Rs 1000/1200; 🏠) Indian families mill about the YN compound, which has two restaurants, a bar and trees strung with lights.

**Hotel Saiprakash** (Map p941; 📞 24611726; www.hotelsaiprakash.com; Nampally Station Rd; s/d with AC from Rs 1200/1400; 🏠)

**Hotel Harsha** (Map p941; 📞 23201188; www.hotelharsha.net; Public Gardens Rd; s/d with AC from US\$30/40; 🏠)

## TOP END

All the following have central AC, and rates include breakfast.

**Golkonda** (Map p939; 📞 66110101; www.thegolkondadahyd.com; Masab Tank; r from US\$185; 🏠 📺) Recently completely overhauled, the Golkonda is growing into its new and improved self: staff are still learning. But rooms are elegant and contemporary, with sumptuous upholstery on chairs and clever touches like a curved glass wall separating the bathroom. Maybe Hyderabad's most chic.

**Taj Krishna** (Map p939; 📞 66664242; www.tajhotels.com; Rd No 1, Banjara Hills; s/d from US\$350/375; 🏠 📺 📺) The sort of opulence you expect for the price: a lobby resembling a *mahal* (palace), marble-inlaid hallway floors, and rooms with elegant furniture and piles of taffeta pillows.

Other recommendations:

**Central Court Hotel** (Map p941; 📞 23232323; www.thecentralcourt.com; Lakdi-ka-pul; s/d from Rs 2595/3495; 🏠 📺) Ever-so-slightly overpriced, but central, spotless and very efficiently run.

**Best Western Amrutha Castle** (Map p941; 📞 66633888; www.amruthacastle.com; Saifabad; s/d from US\$85/98; 🏠 📺 📺) Chains suck, but it looks like a castle!

## Eating

Andhra Pradesh's cuisine has two major influences. The Mughals brought tasty biryanis, *haleem* (pounded, spiced wheat with mutton – see the boxed text, p946) and kebabs. The Andhra style is vegetarian and famous for its spiciness. We use the term 'meals' instead of

'thali' in this chapter; the word 'thali' is not used in this part of India, but they mean the same thing.

## CITY CENTRE

**Mozamjahi Market** (Map p939; cnr Mukarramjahi & Jawaharlal Nehru Rds; 🕒 6am-6pm) A great place to buy fruit and veggies (or ice cream), while enjoying the alluring architecture.

**Karachi's** (Map p941; Mahaprabhu House, JN Rd; snacks Rs 20-40; 🕒 11am-11pm) A tacky, fun fast-food joint with good *chaat* (snacks), veggie burgers, pizza and the enigmatic 'Chinese dosa'.

**Kamat Hotel** (Map p939; SD Rd, Secunderabad; mains Rs 45-75; 🕒 7.30am-10pm) Each Kamat (other branches are on AG's Office Rd and Nampally Station Rd – see Map p941) is slightly different, but they're all cheap and good. Meals (traditional South Indian all-you-can-eat meals; Rs 25 to Rs 37) are reliably delish.

**Kamat Andhra Meals** (Map p941; Troop Bazaar; meals Rs 45; 🕒 lunch & dinner) Excellent authentic Andhra meals on banana leaves. Its sister restaurants in the same compound – Kamat Jowar Bhakri (Maharashtra), Kamat Restaurant (North and South Indian) and Kamat Coffee Shop – are likewise friendly family joints full of happy diners. No relation to Kamat Hotel.

**Sagar Papaji Ka Dhaba** (Map p941; Hanuman Tekdi Rd; mains Rs 35-90; 🕒 lunch & dinner) Always busy, Papaji's has profoundly delicious veg and nonveg biryanis, curries and tikkas. You can watch the guys making naan and throwing it in the tandoor while you wait for a table.

**our pick Hotel Shadab** (Map p939; High Court Rd, Patthargatti; mains Rs 40-130; 🕒 5am-11pm) One meal at Shadab and you'll be forever under its spell. The hopping restaurant is *the* place to get biryani and, during Ramadan, *haleem* (see p946). It has even mastered veg biryani (!) and hundreds of other veg and nonveg delights (if you try the chocolate chicken or pineapple mutton, let us know how it goes). Packed with Old Town families and good vibes.

**Minerva Coffee Shop** (Map p939; Salar Jung Marg; mains Rs 55-85; 🕒 7.30am-11pm) The North Indian meal (Rs 85) in this old-school coffee shop is a delight – five delicious curries, topped off with fruit salad and ice cream. All with a river view. There's a Minerva in Somajiguda, too.

**Gufaa** (Map p941; 📞 23298811; Ori's Cuisine Court, Bashirbagh Rd; mains Rs 130-200; 🕒 lunch & dinner) The eccentric Gufaa has faux-rock walls with African masks, leopard-print upholstery, twinkling stars on the ceiling and red roses

on the tables. And it serves Peshawari food. But somehow it works, and even 'dhal with roti' (black dhal stewed with fresh cream and tomatoes, and roti made with chillies) is extraordinary here.

**Palace Heights Restaurant & Bar** (Map p941; ☎ 24754483; 8th fl, Triveni Complex; mains Rs 130-225; ☎ 11am-11pm) This pearl in the dirty shell of an old city-centre building has a palatial interior and incredible views. The service is excellent, the wine list endless and the nonveg menu – Andhran, Goan, Chinese, Italian, Filipino – extensive.

Also recommended:

**Sukha Sagara** (Map p941; AG's Office Rd; mains Rs 40-80; ☎ 7am-10pm)

**Paradise Persis Restaurant** (Map p939; ☎ 55313723; cnr SD & MG Rds, Secunderabad; mains Rs 60-195;

☎ 11am-midnight) Ask any Hyderabadi about biryani, and they'll mention Paradise.

**Ming's Court** (Map p941; ☎ 23298811; Ohri's Cuisine Court, Bashirbagh Rd; mains Rs 120-250; ☎ lunch & dinner)

## BANJARA HILLS

### Restaurants

**Angeethi** (Map p939; ☎ 66255550; 7th fl, Reliance Classic Bldg, Rd No 1; mains Rs 100-285; ☎ lunch & dinner) The setting, designed to resemble an old Punjabi *dhaba* (snack bar), is over the top. But Angeethi does truly outstanding North Indian and Punjabi dishes, such as corn *methi malai* (sweet-corn stew with fenugreek leaves; Rs 105). The lunchtime buffet (Rs 140; Monday to Saturday) is a good deal.

**Fusion 9** (Map p941; ☎ 65577722; Rd No 1; mains Rs 235-550; ☎ lunch & dinner) Soft lighting and cosy décor set off pan-fried Norwegian salmon (Rs 550) or Australian pork chops (Rs 800). There's also (less expensive) Mexican, Thai and pizzas, and lots of imported liquor. The Grill Room upstairs serves grilled goods (dinner only) in a tasteful lounge atmosphere.

Other recommendations:

**Southern Spice** (Map p939; ☎ 23353802; Rd No 2; mains Rs 75-160; ☎ lunch & dinner) Spicy goodness.

**Ohri's Far East** (Map p939; ☎ 23302200; Rd No 12; mains Rs 120-250; ☎ lunch & dinner) Pan-Asian.

### Cafés

**Ofen** (Map p939; ☎ 23372205; Rd No 10; desserts Rs 12-95; ☎ 8am-10.30pm) Cheesecake, chocolate cinnamon roulade and chocolate gugel hopf bread.

**Le Café d'Art** (Map p939; ☎ 66506661; Rd No 1; light meals Rs 115-185; ☎ 9am-11pm) Most of the

## BEATING THE BHATTIS

If you're travelling around Andhra Pradesh during Ramadan (known locally as *Ramazan*), look out for the clay ovens called *bhattis*. You'll probably hear them before you see them. Men gather around, taking turns to vigorously pound *haleem* (a mixture of meat and wheat) inside purpose-built structures. Come nightfall, the serious business of eating begins. The taste is worth the wait.

beautiful young people here come to smoke hookahs (Rs 250) while lounging in antique fauteuils and wooden furniture. We recommend it for the art exhibitions, among the best in town.

## Drinking CAFÉS

**Barista** (Map p939; Ground floor, Reliance Classic Bldg, Rd No 1, Banjara Hills; coffees Rs 20-50; ☎ 8am-10pm)

**Café Coffee Day** (Map p939; Rd No 1, Banjara Hills; coffees Rs 20-50; ☎ 9am-10pm)

**Mocha** (Map p939; ☎ 23350133; Rd No 7, Banjara Hills; coffees Rs 20-180; ☎ 9am-11pm) Full of 20-somethings smoking hookahs, but the décor, the garden and the coffee are fabulous.

## BARS & LOUNGES

Hyderabad's nightlife has gained momentum in recent years, but drinking establishments are limited by a midnight-curfew law. The following are all open from noon to midnight (but don't get going till 9pm). All serve food and charge covers (Rs 500 to 1000) on certain nights – for couples, that is: guys will need a gal to enter. Beer starts at Rs 140, cocktails at Rs 250.

**Liquids** (Map p939; ☎ 66259907; Bhaskar Plaza, Rd No 1, Banjara Hills) Regularly featured in the papers' Society pages, Liquids is reigning queen of Hyderabad nightlife.

**Touch** (Map p939; ☎ 23542422; Trendset Towers, Rd No 2, Banjara Hills) Sporting a sort of feminine *Star Wars* look, with futuristic white furniture and chiffon screens, Touch is all about image. It's a stylish, comfy place to watch the beautiful people.

Begumpet bars/clubs on weekends:

**10 Downing Street** (Map p939; ☎ 55629323; My Home Tycoon Bldg) Looking British.

**Bottles & Chimney** (Map p939; ☎ 27766464; SP Rd)

## Entertainment

### ARTS

**Ravindra Bharati Theatre** (Map p941; ☎ 23233672; www.artistap.com; Public Gardens Rd) Regular music, dance and dramaperformances. Check local papers.

Hyderabad has a burgeoning contemporary-art scene, centred mostly in the Hills:

**ICCR Art Gallery** (Map p941; ☎ 23236398; Ravindra Bharati Theatre, Public Gardens Rd; ☎ 11am-8pm)

**Kalakriti** (Map p939; ☎ 55564466; Rd No 10, Banjara Hills; ☎ 11am-7pm)

**Shishtri** (☎ 23540023; Rd No 15, Jubilee Hills; ☎ 11am-7pm)

### CINEMA

**Hyderabad Film Club** (Map p939; ☎ 9391020243; Ameerpet Rd) Shows foreign films, sometimes in conjunction with the Alliance Française.

Cinemas showing English-language movies:

**Prasad's Multiplex** (Map p939; ☎ 23448989; NTR Marg) A monstrous IMAX theatre.

**PVR** (Map p939; ☎ 66467876; Hyderabad Central, Panjagutta Rd)

**Skyline/Sterling Complex** (Map p941; ☎ 23222633; Bashirbagh)

## Shopping

The bazaars near the Charminar (see p940) are the most exciting places to shop: you'll find exquisite pearls, silks, gold and fabrics alongside billions of bangles.

**Hyderabad Perfumers** (Map p939; ☎ 24577294; Patthargatti; ☎ 10am-8.30pm Mon-Sat) The family-run Hyderabad Perfumers, which has been in business for four generations, can whip something up for you on the spot.

**Meena Bazar** (Map p941; ☎ 24753566; Tilak Rd; ☎ 11am-9.30pm Mon-Sat) Gorgeous saris, *salwar* (trouser) suits and fabrics at fixed prices.

Even if you're not in the market, come here to sightsee.

**Kalanjali** (Map p941; ☎ 23423440; Public Gardens Rd; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Sat) With a huge range of arts, crafts, fabrics and clothing, Kalanjali is a good place to prepare for the bazaar: the prices are higher, but you'll get a feel for what things are worth in a relaxed environment.

**Afreen Suits & Saris** (Map p939; ☎ 55711802; Patthargatti; ☎ 10.30am-10.30pm) A wide range of silks and fabrics are sold here for fixed prices; credit cards accepted.

**Sangeet Sagar** (Map p941; ☎ 23225346; Bashirbagh Rd; ☎ 11am-9pm Mon-Sat) Great little music shop.

Other places for crafts and clothes:

**Fabindia** (Map p939; ☎ 23354526; Rd No 9, Banjara Hills; ☎ 10am-7.30pm Tue-Sun) Clothes in stunning fabrics at good prices.

**Anokhi** (Map p939; ☎ 23350271; Rd No 10, Banjara Hills; ☎ 10.30am-8pm Mon-Sat) Stylish clothes in hand-block prints.

**Bidri Crafts** (Map p941; ☎ 23232657; Gunfoundry; ☎ 10am-9pm Mon-Sat)

**Lepakshi** (Map p941; ☎ 23235028; Gunfoundry; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Sat) Andhra crafts.

## Getting There & Away

To handle overcrowding at Hyderabad airport, a massive new international airport is scheduled to open in mid-2008 at Shamshabad, about 20km southwest of the city.

### AIR

#### Domestic Airlines

Indian Airlines has the highest domestic fares, with Jet, Air Sahara and Kingfisher following close behind. Air Deccan, along with online budget airlines GoAir, Indigo, Paramount and spiceJet, has the lowest.

### DAILY DOMESTIC FLIGHTS FROM HYDERABAD

Destination	IA Fare (US\$)	Duration (hr)	Other Airlines
Bengaluru	103	1	JA/AS/DN/K
Chennai	103	1	JA/DN/SP
Delhi	175	2	JA/AS/DN/G/SP
Kolkata	175	2	JA/AS/DN
Mumbai	106	1	JA/AS/DN/G/SP
Tirupathi	85	1	DN
Visakhapatnam	100	1	AS/DN

Note: Fares are one way. Airline codes: IA=Indian Airlines, JA=Jet Airways, AS=Air Sahara, DN=Air Deccan, G=Go Air, K=Kingfisher, SP=spiceJet.

Domestic airlines in Hyderabad:

**Air Deccan** (☎ 9845777008, airport 27902794)

**Air Sahara** (Map p941; ☎ 66782020; Secretariat Rd)

**Indian Airlines** (Map p941; ☎ 1800 1801407; HACA Bhavan, AG's Office Rd)

**Jet Airways** (Map p941; ☎ 39824444; Adarsh Nagar, Hill Fort Rd)

### International Airlines

**Air India** (Map p941; ☎ call centre 1800 227722, airport 23389711; HACA Bhavan, AG's Office Rd)

**British Airways** (Map p941; ☎ 23211270, 23296437; Chapel Rd)

**Cathay Pacific** (Map p939; ☎ 27702234; 44 SD Rd, Secunderabad)

**Emirates** (Map p939; ☎ 66234444; Rd No 1, Banjara Hills)

**GSA Transworld Travels** (Map p941; ☎ 23210947; Chapel Rd) For Qantas.

**Interglobe Air Transport** (Map p941; ☎ 23233590; Chapel Rd) For Air New Zealand, Delta, Indigo, South African, United Airlines and Virgin Atlantic.

**Jetair Tours** (Map p941; ☎ 23298773; 1st fl, Summit House, Hill Fort Rd) For American, Austrian, Bangladesh Airlines, Gulf Air and Royal Jordanian.

**KLM** (Map p939; ☎ airport 27905015)

**Lufthansa** (Map p939; ☎ 23481000; Begumpet) Next to the Lifestyle Building.

**Nagarjuna Travels** (Map p939; ☎ 23372429; Raj Bhavan Rd, Somajiguda) For Sri Lankan Airlines.

### BUS

Hyderabad's long-distance bus stations are mind-bogglingly efficient. **Mahatma Gandhi bus station** (Map p939; ☎ 24614406), better known as Imlibun, has an **advance booking office** (☎ 8am-9pm). For Nagarjunakonda, take one of the frequent morning buses to Vinukonda or

Macherla and get off en route. For trips to Karnataka, better go with **KSRTC** (☎ 24656430).

Secunderabad's **Jubilee bus station** (Map p939; ☎ 27802203) is less convenient, but does operate Volvo AC buses to Bengaluru (Rs 620, 10 hours, three daily), Chennai (Rs 670, 12 hours, one daily) and Visakhapatnam (Rs 675, 13 hours, one daily).

Private bus companies with super-deluxe services are on Nampally High Rd, near the train station entrance.

### TRAIN

Secunderabad (Map p939), Hyderabad (Map p939) – also known as Nampally – and Kacheguda (Map p939) are the three major train stations. Most through trains stop at Secunderabad and Kacheguda, which is more convenient for Abids. See the boxed text, opposite, for key routes. Bookings can be made at Hyderabad and Secunderabad stations from 8am to 8pm Monday to Saturday (to 2pm Sunday). Both stations have a tourist counter. For general inquiries, phone ☎ 131; for reservation status, ☎ 135.

### Getting Around

#### TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Hyderabad Airport (Map p939) is in Begumpet, 8km north of Abids. Take an autorickshaw from Abids (Rs 60) or a taxi (Rs 150). A prepaid autorickshaw from the airport costs Rs 95.

#### AUTORICKSHAW

Except in the Old Town, drivers generally use their meters. Flag fall is Rs 10 for the first kilometre, then Rs 5 for each additional

#### BUSES FROM IMLIBUN

Destination	Fare (Rs)	Duration (hr)	Departures (daily)
Bengaluru	358(H)/405(A)/620(V)	12/10/10	14
Bidar	69(E)	4	4
Bijapur	212(E)/295(A)	10	7
Chennai	372(H)/670(V)	12	3
Hospet	195(H)/280(A)	12	2
Mumbai	424(E)/720(V)	16/12	6
Mysore	755(V)	13	2
Tirupathi	248(E)/321(H)	12	7
Vijayawada	157(H)/272(V)	6/5	every 15min
Warangal	70(E)	3	half-hourly

E – express, H – hi-tech, A – AC sleeper, V – Volvo AC

## MAJOR TRAINS FROM HYDERABAD &amp; SECUNDERABAD

Destination	Train No & Name	Fare (Rs)	Duration (hr)	Departures
Bengaluru	2430 <i>Rajdhani</i>	1065/1460	12	6.50pm S (Tue, Wed, Sat & Sun)
	2785 <i>Secunderabad-Bangalore Exp</i>	288/756/1061	11	7.05pm K
Chennai	2754 <i>Hyderabad-Chennai Exp</i>	301/792/1113	13	4.55pm H
	2760 <i>Charminar Exp</i>	317/837/1178	14	6.30pm H
Delhi	2723 <i>Andhra Pradesh Exp</i>	469/1264/1794	26	6.25am H
	2429 <i>Rajdhani</i>	1725/2335	26	7.25am S (Mon, Tue, Thu & Fri)
Kolkata	2704 <i>Falaknuma Exp</i>	449/1208/1713	26	4pm S
	8646 <i>East Coast Exp</i>	437/1200/1716	30	10am H
Mumbai	7032 <i>Hussain Sagar Exp</i>	306/807/1134	15	2.45pm H
	7032 <i>Hyderabad-Mumbai Exp</i>	286/777/1104	15	8.40pm H
Tirupathi	2734 <i>Narayanadri Exp</i>	288/756/1061	12	6.05pm S
	2797 <i>Venkatadri Exp</i>	281/735/1030	12	8.05pm K
Visakhapatnam	2728 <i>Godavari Exp</i>	299/785/1103	11	5.15pm H

S – Secunderabad, H – Hyderabad, K – Kacheguda. Rajdhani fares are 3AC/2AC; express (Exp) fares are sleeper/3AC/2AC.

kilometre. Between 10pm and 5am a 50% surcharge applies.

## BUS

Lots of local buses originate at **Koti bus station** (Map p939; Maharani Jhansi Rd; ☎ 24hr), so if you come here you might get a seat. The 'travel as you like' ticket (Rs 30), available from bus conductors, permits unlimited travel anywhere within the city on the day of purchase.

Useful local bus routes:

Bus No	Route
20D	Jubilee station–Nampally
1P	Secunderabad station–Jubilee station
2/2V, 8A/8U,	Charminar–Secunderabad station
1K, 1B, 3S5, 40	Secunderabad station–Koti
20P, 20V, 49, 49P	Secunderabad station–Nampally
65G/66G	Charminar–Golconda
87	Charminar–Nampally
1190R, 142M	Nampally–Golconda
142K	Koti–Golconda

## CAR

There are places around Nampally station where you can rent a car and driver; **City Cabs** (☎ 27760000; Begumpet) is reliable for local taxis. For local and longer trips, try **Banjara Travels** (☎ 23394368; Rd No 12, Banjara Hills).

## TRAIN

The MMTS trains are a convenient way to get around, particularly between the three main train stations. There are two main lines. Hyderabad (Nampally) to Lingampalli (northwest of Banjara Hills) has 11 stops, including Lakdikapul, Khairatabad, Necklace Rd, Begumpet and Hitec City. The Falaknuma (south of Old Town) to Begumpet line passes by Yakutupura, Dabirpura, Malakpet, Kacheguda and Secunderabad, among others. Trains will be labelled with their start and end point: so, HL is Hyderabad–Lingampalli, FS is Falaknuma–Secunderabad and so on. Trains are new and efficient, but they only run about every 45 minutes. Tickets are Rs 5 to 10.

## NAGARJUNAKONDA

☎ 08680

The ancient remains at this site, 150km south-east of Hyderabad, were discovered in 1926 by archaeologist AR Saraswathi. In 1953, when it became known that a massive hydroelectric project would soon create the **Nagarjuna Sagar** reservoir, which would flood the area, a major six-year excavation was undertaken to unearth the area's many Buddhist ruins: stupas, *viharas*, *chaityas* (temples) and *mandapas* (pillared pavilions), as well as some outstanding examples of white-marble depictions of the Buddha's life. The finds were reassembled

## STATE OF GOOD KARMA

In its typically understated way, Andhra Pradesh doesn't make a big deal of its vast archeological – and karmic – wealth. But in fact, the ruins of Andhra Pradesh's rich Buddhist history sprinkle the state like so many forgotten pearls of the Buddha's wisdom. Only a few of Andhra's 150 stupas, *viharas* (monastery complexes), caves and other sites have been excavated, turning up rare relics of the Buddha (usually pearl-like pieces of bone, found with offerings like golden flowers). They speak of a time when Andhra Pradesh – or Andhradesa – was a hotbed of Buddhist activity, when monks came from around the world to learn from some of the tradition's most renowned teachers, and when Indian monks set off for Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia via the Krishna and Godavari Rivers and the Bay of Bengal to spread the teaching of the Buddha.

Andhradesa's Buddhist culture, in which sangha (community of monks and nuns), laity and statespeople all took part, lasted around 1500 years from the 6th century BC. There's no historical evidence for it, but some even say that the Master himself visited the area.

Andhradesa's first practitioners were likely the disciples of Bavari, an ascetic who lived on the banks of the Godavari River and sent his followers north to bring back the Buddha's teaching. But the dharma really took off in the 3rd century BC under Ashoka (see p41), who dispatched monks out across his empire to teach and construct stupas enshrined with relics of the Buddha. (Being near these was thought to help people progress on the path to enlightenment.)

Succeeding Ashoka, the Satavahanas and then Ikshvakus were also supportive. At their capital at Amaravathi, the Satavahanas adorned Ashoka's modest stupa with elegant decoration. They built monasteries across the Krishna Valley and exported the dharma through their sophisticated maritime network.

It was also during the Satavahana reign that Nagarjuna lived. Considered by many to be the progenitor of Mahayana Buddhism, the eminent monk was equal parts logician, philosopher and meditator, and he wrote several groundbreaking works (with evocative titles like *Seventy Verses on Emptiness*) that shaped contemporary Buddhist thought. Other important monk-philosophers would emerge from the area in the centuries to follow, making Andhradesa a sort of Buddhist motherland of the South.

Those interested in Buddhist history will find these excavated sites ripe for exploring, but most are out of the way, infrastructure is nil and you may have trouble finding them. If you're game, head to the area around Vijayawada for Chandavaram, Guntupalli or Bhattiprolu, and near Visakhapatnam for Thotlakonda, Sankaram, Ramatirtham and Bavikonda.

on Nagarjunakonda, an island in the middle of the dam.

Prehistoric remnants suggest human activity began here around 200,000 years ago. From the 3rd century BC until the 4th century AD, the Krishna River valley was home to powerful empires that supported the sangha (community of monks and nuns), including the Ikshvakus, whose capital was Nagarjunakonda. It's estimated that this area alone had 30 monasteries.

Nagarjunakonda is named after Nagarjuna, a 2nd-century-AD monk and philosopher. He founded the Madhyamika school, which developed into Mahayana Buddhism (see above).

## Sights

### NAGARJUNAKONDA MUSEUM

This thoughtfully laid-out museum (Indian/foreigner Rs 2/US\$2; ☎ 9.30am-3.45pm Sat-Thu) has Stone

Age picks, hoes and spears on exhibit, but more impressive are its Buddha statues and the carved stone slabs that once adorned stupas. Most of them are from the 3rd century AD and depict scenes from the Buddha's life, interspersed with *mithuna* (paired male and female) figures languorously looking on.

Launches (Rs 45, one hour) depart for the island from Vijayapuri, on the banks of Nagarjuna Sagar, at 8.30am and 1.30pm, and stay for 30 minutes. To do the place justice, take the morning launch out and the afternoon one back. Extra express launches (Rs 60) may run on weekends and holidays. Bring food and water.

## Sleeping & Eating

Nagarjunakonda is popular, and accommodation can be tight during weekends and holidays.



**Project House** (Punnam; ☎ 276540; r from Rs 300; 🍽) This place is 5km from the jetty, opposite the main bus stand in Hill Colony. Rooms are basic but clean enough, and the veg restaurant is OK.

**Nagarjuna Resort** (☎ 08642-242471; r from Rs 450; 🍽) The most convenient place to stay, right across the road from the boat launch, has spacious rooms with geysers. Those in front have good views, and there's a multicuisine restaurant.

**Vijay Vihar Complex** (☎ 277362; fax 276633; r with AC from Rs 1060; 🍽) Two kilometres up the hill from Project House is this fancy place overlooking the lake. Rooms have balconies with excellent views. The restaurant has a range of veg and nonveg dishes.

### Getting There & Away

The easiest way to visit Nagarjunakonda is with **APTDC** (☎ 040-2789310). Tours (Rs 360) depart from Hyderabad on weekends at 7.30am from Yatri Nivas Hotel (see p945), returning at 9.30pm.

You can also make your own way there from Hyderabad or Vijayawada. From Hyderabad, take a bus to Macherla or Vinukonda, which will stop at Nagarjuna Sagar. The nearest train station is 22km away at Macherla, where buses leave regularly for Nagarjuna Sagar.

## WARANGAL

☎ 0870 / pop 528,570

Warangal was the capital of the Kakatiya kingdom, which covered the greater part of present-day Andhra Pradesh from the late 12th to early 14th centuries until it was conquered by the Tughlaqs of Delhi. The Hindu Kakatiyas were great builders and patrons of Telugu literature and arts, and it was during their reign that the Chalukyan style of temple architecture reached its pinnacle.

If you're interested in Hindu temple development, then it's worth the trip to Warangal, which is also a friendly town, and Palampet (see p952). It's possible – but not leisurely – to visit both places on a long day trip from Hyderabad, 157km away.

Most buses and trains will stop en route at Bhongir, about 60km from Hyderabad. It's well worth jumping down for a couple of hours to climb the fantastical-looking 12th-century Chalukyan **hill fort** (Rs 3) from which the town gets its name. Looking like a gargantuan stone egg, the hill is mostly ringed by stairs.

## Orientation & Information

Warangal, Hanamkonda and Kazhipet are sister towns. The Warangal train station and bus stand are opposite each other, and the post office and police station are on Station Rd. Main Rd connects Warangal and Hanamkonda.

There are some **internet cafés** (MG Rd; per hr Rs 20) near Hotel Ratna. The **State Bank of Hyderabad** (Station Rd) has an ATM. The **Department of Tourism** (☎ 2459201; Hanamkonda-Kazhipet Rd, opposite REC; 🕒 10.30am-5pm Sun-Fri & holidays) is helpful and can advise on trips in Warangal and beyond.

## Sights

### FORT

Warangal's **fort** (Indian/foreigner Rs 5/US\$2; 🌅 dawn-dusk) was a massive construction with three distinct circular strongholds surrounded by a moat. Four paths with decorative gateways, set according to the cardinal points, led to the Swayambhava, a huge Shiva temple. The gateways are still obvious, but most of the fort is in ruins.

The fort is easily reached from Warangal by bus, bike or autorickshaw (Rs 75 return, including waiting time).

### HANAMKONDA

Built in 1163, the **1000-Pillared Temple** (🕒 6am-6pm) on the slopes of Hanamkonda Hill, 400m from the Hanamkonda crossroads, is a fine example of Chalukyan architecture in a peaceful, leafy setting. Dedicated to three deities – Shiva, Vishnu and Surya – it has been carefully restored with intricately carved pillars and a central, very impressive Nandi of black basalt.

Down the hill and 3km to the right is the small **Siddheshwara Temple**. The **Bhadrakali Temple**, featuring a stone statue of Kali, seated with a weapon in each of her eight hands, is high on a hill between Hanamkonda and Warangal.

## Sleeping

Warangal has a range of good budget hotels.

**Vijaya Lodge** (☎ 2501222; fax 2446864; Station Rd; s/d from Rs 130/200) About 100m from the train station, the Vijaya is a great deal, with tidy, compact rooms, layers of fresh, pastel paint on the walls and an almost domestic touch.

**Hotel Ratna** (☎ 2500645; fax 2500096; MG Rd; s/d from Rs 299/400; 🍽) The Ratna has shiny floors and professional staff – including friendly, English-speaking houseboys – and it accepts

credit cards. Its veg restaurant, *Kavya*, gets good reviews (mains Rs 40 to 85).

**Hotel Surya** (☎ 2441834; fax 2441836; Station Rd; s/d incl breakfast from Rs 390/450; 🍽️) Near the stations, this modern and well-run hotel has smart rooms, which are only just beginning to fade, constant hot water and a good restaurant downstairs.

## Eating

Warangal has several meals places (we use the term 'meals' instead of thali in this chapter), some of which have seen better days. The hotel restaurants are good bets.

**Sri Raghavendra Bhavan** (Station Rd; meals Rs 22; ☎ 5.30am-10.30pm) A little neighbourhood joint with the best meals in Warangal. It's close to Hotel Surya.

**Kanishka** (☎ 2578491; Main Rd, Hanamkonda; mains Rs 30-80; ☎ 6.30am-10.30pm) The Hotel Ashoka, a Hanamkonda institution, has a busy compound with this excellent veg restaurant, a non-veg restaurant, a bar-restaurant and a pub.

**Surabhi** (Station Rd; mains Rs 40-75; ☎ 11am-3pm & 7-11pm) Surprisingly good food in somewhat elegant surroundings at the Hotel Surya. The menu includes such wonders as the 'Surabhi special dosa', stuffed with carrots, *paneer* (unfermented cheese), onions and ghee (Rs 30).

## Getting There & Away

Bus services run to Vijayawada (Rs 190, seven hours, seven daily) from Warangal. Frequent buses to Hyderabad (Rs 74, 3½ hours) depart from Hanamkonda bus station, an Rs 6 bus ride away.

Warangal is a major rail junction. Trains go regularly to Hyderabad (2nd/chair Rs 71/232, three hours), Vijayawada (sleeper/3AC/2AC Rs 125/321/448, four hours) and Chennai (sleeper/3AC/2AC Rs 281/735/1030, 10 hours). Many trains go to Delhi daily.

## Getting Around

Bus 28 goes to the fort and regular buses go to all the other sites. You can rent bicycles at **Ramesh Kumar Cycle Taxi** (Station Rd; per hr Rs 4; ☎ 8am-10pm). A shared autorickshaw ride costs Rs 6.

## AROUND WARANGAL

### Palampet

About 65km northeast of Warangal, the stunning **Ramappa Temple** (☎ 6am-6.30pm), built in 1234, is an attractive example of Kakatiya architecture, although it was clearly influenced by Chalukya and Hoysala styles. Its pillars

are ornately carved and its eaves shelter fine statues of female forms.

Just 1km south, the Kakatiyas constructed **Ramappa Cheruvu** to serve as temple tank. The artificial lake now assumes a natural presence in the landscape.

The easiest way to get here is by private car, but frequent buses also run from Hanamkonda to Mulugu (Rs 25). From Mulugu, you can take a bus (Rs 4, every half-hour) or shared jeep (Rs 5) to the village of Palampet. The temple is about 500m from here.

## VISAKHAPATNAM

☎ 0891 / pop 1.3 million

Visakhapatnam – also called Vizag (*vie-zag*) – is Andhra Pradesh's second-largest city, though it feels more like an ageing beach-resort town. It's famous for shipbuilding and steel manufacturing, and now it's also an up-and-comer in the call-centre, software and film industries. But we love it for its kitschy coasts. The run-down boardwalk along Ramakrishna Beach has lots of spunk, and the beach at nearby Rushikonda is one of Andhra's best. Vizag is also a base for visits to the Araku Valley (see p954).

## Orientation

Vizag's train station sits in a hive of shops and hotels on the western edge of town, near the port. Dwarakanagar, Vizag's commercial centre, is 1.5km northeast of the train station, and the bus stand, known as RTC Complex, is 2km due east. Waltair and its Ramakrishna Beach are about 2km southeast of RTC.

## Information

ATMs are all around. RTC Complex has several internet cafés, some open 24 hours.

**APTDC** RTC Complex (☎ 2788820; ☎ 6am-10pm); train station (☎ 2788821; ☎ 5am-11pm) Information and tours.

**iWay** (☎ 3293692; 1st Lane, Dwarakanagar; per hr Rs 25; ☎ 8.30am-11pm) Secure web browsing. Next to Pollocks School.

**Pages Book Shop** (☎ 6450555; Old Jail Rd, Daba Gardens; ☎ 9.30am-9.30pm)

**Thomas Cook** (☎ 2588112; Eswar Plaza, Dwarakanagar; ☎ 9am-6.30pm Mon-Sat) Next to ICICI Bank.

**Train station cloak room** (per day Rs 10, locker per day Rs 15; ☎ 24hr)

## Sights & Activities

The long beaches of **Waltair** overlook the Bay of Bengal, with its mammoth ships and brightly painted fishing boats. Its coastal **Beach**

**Rd.** lined with parks and weird sculptures, is great for long walks.

The best beaches for swimming are at **Rushikonda**, 8km north. On the way, **Kailasagiri Hill** has gardens, playgrounds, and a gargantuan Shiva and Parvati. The views from the hill and the **Kailasagiri Passenger ropeway** (☎ 6510334; admission Rs 44; ⏰ 11am-1pm & 2-8pm) are awesome. Movies or cricket matches are sometimes shown across Beach Rd, at the festive **Tenetti Beach**.

At Simhachalam Hill, 10km northwest of town, is a fine 11th-century **Vishnu Temple** (⏰ 6-10am & 4-6pm) in Orissan style. You can give *puja* to the deity, who's covered with sandalwood paste. Bus 6 A/H goes here.

## Tours

APTDC operates full-day tours of the city (Rs 245) and of Araku Valley (see p954).

## Sleeping

### VISAKHAPATNAM

Budget and midrange hotels huddle around the train station, which has **retiring rooms** (r from Rs 200; 🛏️). Waltair has a much better vibe, but few budget hotels. Prices may rise for Dussehra/Diwali holidays, when Bengalis swarm to Vizag.

**Sree Kanya Lodge** (☎ 2564881; Bowdara Rd; s/d from Rs 175/350; 🛏️) Near the train station but out of the bustle, Sree Kanya is mostly characterless but clean and bright, with sheets folded in little squares on the beds, friendly staff, balconies in most rooms and a good restaurant.

**Jaabily** (☎ 2706468; www.jaabilybeachinn.com; Beach Rd; r from Rs 595; 🛏️) The Jaabily has an eclectic, overpriced assortment of so-so rooms, an old beach-cabana feel and a colourful but gritty spot near the beach. Checkout is noon.

**Taj Residency** (☎ 2567756; www.tajhotels.com; Beach Rd; s/d from US\$100/110; 🛏️ 🍷 🚗) The usual Taj classiness, with great views. Slightly frayed at the edges, but where else can you stay at a Taj for this price? Checkout is noon.

Other recommendations:

**Hotel Morya** (☎ 2731112; hotelmorya@yahoo.co.in; Bowdara Rd; r from Rs 350; 🛏️)

**Hotel Daspalla** (☎ 2564825; www.daspallagroup.com; Suryabagh; s/d incl breakfast from Rs 1200/1400; 🛏️ 🍷) Looking like the inside of an Ambassador car, it's Vizag's classic. Has a bar named Dimple.

## RUSHIKONDA

**Sai Priya Resort** (☎ 2790333; www.saipriya.com; cottages/r from Rs 550/900; 🛏️ 🍷) Modern rooms and

cool cottages of bamboo and cane in a tranquil setting on the shore. Checkout is a rude 8am, though, and the service charge is a whopping 10%. Nonguests can use the pool for Rs 50.

**Punnami Beach Resort** (☎ 2788826; r with AC from Rs 1350; 🛏️) Set on a cliff top over the beach, the Punnami has spacious rooms with crappy bathrooms and fabulous bay views.

## Eating & Drinking

At night, guys barbecue fish (Rs 80) along Ramakrishna Beach, and the beachfront restaurants at Rushikonda, next to Punnami, are hopping.

**New Andhra Hotel** (Sree Kanya Lodge, Bowdara Rd; mains Rs 25-75; ⏰ lunch & dinner) An unassuming little place with *really* good, *really* hot Andhra dishes. Meals and biryani are top-notch.

**Masala** (☎ 2750750, Signature Towers, 1st fl, Asilmetta; mains Rs 60-110; ⏰ lunch & dinner) Near Sampath Vinayaka Temple, Masala does out-of-this-world Andhra, tandoori and Chinese. Try the *chepa pulusu* (Andhra-style fish; Rs 85).

**Café Coffee Day** (coffee Rs 20-50) Up the road from Masala.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

Vizag's **airport** (☎ 2572020) is 13km west of town. An autorickshaw there should cost Rs 120. Bus 38 will take you there for Rs 6.

**Air Deccan** (☎ 2543352, 9849677008; Prantosini Apartments No 7, CBM Compound; ⏰ 9am-8pm) Daily flights: Hyderabad, Chennai, Tirupathi and Bengaluru.

**Air Sahara** (☎ 6672333; Kalyani Estates, near Big Bazaar, Dwarakanagar) Daily flights: Hyderabad and Mumbai; frequent flights to Bengaluru, Delhi and Kolkata.

**Indian Airlines** (☎ 2746501, 1800 1801407; LIC Bldg) Daily flights: Chennai, Hyderabad, Mumbai (via Hyderabad) and Delhi.

### BOAT

Boats depart every now and then for Port Blair in the Andaman Islands (see p1112). If you want to try your luck, bookings for the 56-hour journey can be made at the **Shipping Office** (☎ 2565584, 2562661; Av Bhanaji Row; ⏰ 8am-5pm) in the port complex.

### BUS

You'll probably take the train to/from Vizag, but its **bus stand** (☎ 2746400) is well organised, with frequent services to Vijayawada (deluxe/Volvo Rs 225/404, nine hours) and Hyderabad (ordinary/Volvo Rs 382/676, 14/12 hours).

**TRAIN**

Visakhapatnam Junction station is on the Kolkata–Chennai line. The overnight *Coromandel Express* (sleeper/3AC/2AC Rs 338/896/1263, 13½ hours) is the fastest of the five daily trains running to Kolkata. Heading south, it goes to Vijayawada (sleeper/3AC/2AC Rs 189/476/659, 5½ hours) and Chennai (sleeper/3AC/2AC Rs 315/831/1170, 13 hours). Many other trains head to Vijayawada daily; seven others go to Chennai.

**AROUND VISAKHAPATNAM**

Andhra's best train ride is through the magnificent Eastern Ghats to the **Araku Valley**, 120km north of Vizag. The area is home to isolated tribal communities, and the tiny **Museum of Habitat** (admission Rs 5; ☎ 9am–12.30pm & 1.30–5.30pm) has fascinating exhibits of indigenous life. APTDC runs a tour from Vizag (see p952; Rs 430), which takes in a performance of Dhinsa, a tribal dance, and the million-year-old limestone **Borra Caves** (Rs 25; ☎ 10am–5pm), 30km from Araku.

The **Punnami Hill Resort** (☎ 958936-249204; cottages from Rs 300; 🏠), near the museum, has cottages with good views. But it's more fun to stay at the forest retreat of **Jungle Bells** (Tyda; cottages from Rs 650; 🏠), 45km from Araku. It hurts to say the name, true. But its wooden cottages – including the 'igloo hut' – are tucked away in woods. Book at APTDC (see p952).

The Kirandol passenger train (Rs 24, five hours) leaves Vizag at 7.45am and Araku at 3pm. It's a slow, spectacular ride on a broad-gauge line; sit on the right-hand side coming out of Vizag for the best views. For Jungle Bells, get off at Tyda station, 500m from the resort.

**VIJAYAWADA**

☎ 0866 / pop 1 million

Vijayawada, at the head of the delta of the mighty Krishna River, is considered by many to be the heart of Andhra culture and language. It's also an important Hindu site, both for its Durga temple and the Krishna Pushkaram, held every 12 years, when Lord Pushkara is believed to reside in the River Krishna. Nearby Amaravathi, meanwhile, was a centre of Buddhist learning and practise for many centuries.

Vijayawada's a big, bustling city and an important port, but it's also surrounded by hills, intersected by canals, ringed by fields of rice and palm, and imbued with a charm that takes time to emerge.

**Orientation**

The Krishna River cuts across the southern end of the city. The bus station is just north of the river, and the train station is in the centre of town, near the Governorpet neighbourhood, which has lots of hotels.

**Information**

**Apollo Pharmacy** (☎ 2432333; Vijaya Talkies Junction, Karl Marx Rd; ☎ 6am–11pm)

**APTDC** (☎ 2571393; MG Rd; ☎ 7am–8pm) Across from PWD Grounds. Not particularly helpful.

**Care Hospital** (☎ 2470100; Siddhartha Nagar)

**Cloakrooms** (per day Rs 10; ☎ 24hr) At the train and bus stations.

**Department of Tourism** (☎ 2577577; Train Station; ☎ 10am–5pm)

**State Bank of Hyderabad** (☎ 2574832; 1st fl, Vijaya Commercial Complex, Governorpet; ☎ 10.30am–3pm Mon–Fri) Changes currency and travellers cheques. Near Vijayawada.net.

**Vijayawada.net** (☎ 2574242; Rajagopalachari St, Governorpet; per hr Rs 20; ☎ 9.30am–9.30pm Mon–Sat, 10am–6.30pm Sun) Off Prakasam Rd, towards Apsara Theatre.

**Sights****CAVE TEMPLES**

Four kilometres southwest of Vijayawada, the stunning 7th-century **Undavalli cave temples** (Indian/foreigner Rs 5/US\$2; ☎ 9am–6pm) cut a fine silhouette against the palm trees and rice paddies. Shrines are dedicated to the Trimurti – Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva – and one cave on the third level houses a huge, beautiful statue of reclining Vishnu while seated deities and animals stand guard out the front. Bus 301 goes here.

The east side of Vijayawada is also peppered with defunct cave temples, like the very damaged but nonetheless interesting 6th- to 7th-century **Mogalarajapuram Caves**.

**VICTORIA JUBILEE MUSEUM**

The best part of this **museum** (☎ 2574299; MG Rd; admission Rs 3; ☎ 10.30am–5pm Sat–Thu) is the building itself, built in 1877 to honour Queen Victoria's coronation jubilee. Later, in 1921, it hosted the Congress meeting where a new tricolour flag was introduced. Mahatma Gandhi added a wheel to the design and made it the Indian National Congress's official flag.

The interesting architecture outshines the museum's small collection of art and arms. But the garden, where temple sculpture from around the state lines shady paths, is lovely.

### KANAKA DURGA TEMPLE

This **temple** (Indrakila Hill; ☎ 5am-9pm) is dedicated to Kanaka Durga, the goddess and protector of the city. Legend has it that she eradicated powerful demons from the area. She now receives continual gratitude from her followers, who credit her with Vijayawada's prosperity. Avoid mornings and bring lots of change for blessings.

### GHATS

Vijayawada's Krishna River has 10 ghats running along its shores. The Krishnaveni ghat, just across from the bus stand, is a fascinating place to sit and watch the world – and its laundry, swimming kids and prayers – go by.

### Courses

**Dhamma Vijaya** (Vipassana Meditation Centre; ☎ 08812-225522; www.dhamma.org; Eluru-Chintalapudi Rd, Pedavegi Mandalam) offers intensive 10-day *vipassana* meditation courses free of charge. Frequent trains run from Vijayawada to Eluru (2nd/ chair Rs 52/197, one hour). The centre is 15km from Eluru; call for details.

### Sleeping & Eating

The train station's clean and spacious **retiring rooms** (dm/s/d from Rs 50/120/250; ☎) are a great option. The bus station has **dorms** (☎ 3297809; from Rs 100) for gents.

**Sree Lakshmi Vilas Modern Cafe** (☎ 2572525; Besant Rd, Governorpet; s with shared bathroom Rs 90, s/d with private bathroom from Rs 150/300) With black-and-white check floors and thick wooden banisters, this place has a heavy 1940s vibe. Housekeeping, however, is not its strong suit. The veg restaurant (meals Rs 24) is excellent, with fresh juices (Rs 10) and mismatched wooden chairs.

**Hotel Santhi** (☎ 2577351; Apsara Theatre Junction, Governorpet; s/d from Rs 350/450; ☎) Well-organised Santhi feels like a midrange place despite its prices, with its pastel-pink and mint-green rooms, two-tone cabinets and newish bathrooms.

**Hotel Grand Residency** (☎ 6668505; grandvja@sify.com; Prakasam Rd; s/d with AC from Rs 825/925; ☎) Light, airy rooms that aren't huge but very smart, with some style, eg lacquered furniture. Reserve in advance if you can. The restaurant, Tulips (mains Rs 30 to 95; open for dinner), has good veg and nonveg, and the hotel also has a bar.

**Cross Roads** (Prakasam Rd; mains Rs 50-95; ☎ lunch & dinner) There's sometimes a wait at this popular

family place specialising in quality kebabs, biryani and North Indian dishes. Save room for ice cream.

Other recommendations:

**Hotel Sree Vasudev** (☎ 2571345; Mudda Subbaiah St, Governorpet; s/d from Rs 90/130) Just behind Sree Lakshmi. Slightly less character, slightly cleaner toilets.

**Jayalakshmi Cool Magic** (Prakasam Rd, Governorpet; mains Rs 25-45; ☎ 9.30am-10.30pm) Outdoor patio seating and chicken *masala dosas*.

### Getting There & Away

The bus stand has a helpful **inquiry desk** (☎ 2522200). Frequent services run to Hyderabad (deluxe/Volvo Rs 170/280, six hours), Amaravathi (Rs 22, 1½ hours), Warangal (deluxe Rs 120, six hours) and Visakhapatnam (deluxe/Volvo Rs 230/400, 10 hours).

Vijayawada is on the main Chennai-Kolkata and Chennai-Delhi railway lines. The daily *Coromandel Express* runs to Chennai (sleeper/3AC/2AC Rs 214/544/758, seven hours) and, the other way, to Kolkata (sleeper/3AC/2AC Rs 401/1073/1518, 20 hours). Speedy *Rajdhani* (Thursday and Saturday) and *Jan Shatabdi* (daily except Tuesday) trains also ply the Chennai-Vijayawada route.

Plenty of trains run to Hyderabad (2nd/ chair Rs 115/386, 6½ hours) and Tirupathi (sleeper/3AC/2AC Rs 181/480/708, seven hours).

The **computerised advance booking office** (inquiry ☎ 133, 2577775; reservations ☎ 136, 2578955) is in the station basement.

### AROUND VIJAYAWADA Amaravathi

Amaravathi, 60km west of Vijayawada, was once the Andhran capital and a significant Buddhist centre. India's biggest **stupa** (Indian/foreigner Rs 5/100; ☎ 8am-6pm), measuring 27m high, was constructed here in the 3rd century BC, when Emperor Ashoka sent the monk Bhikku Mahadeva south to spread the Buddha's teaching. All that remains are a mound and some stones, but the nearby **museum** (admission Rs 2; ☎ 10am-5pm Sat-Thu) has a small replica of the stupa, with its intricately carved pillars, marble-surfaced dome and carvings of the life of the Buddha. It also has the relics once enshrined in the stupa and a reconstruction of part of the surrounding gateway. It's worth the trip, but most of Amaravathi's best sculptures are in London's British Museum and Chennai's Government Museum (p1033).

About 1km down the road is the **Dhyana Buddha**, a 20m-high seated Buddha built on the site where the Dalai Lama spoke at the 2006 Kalachakra.

Buses run from Vijayawada to Amara-vathi every hour or so (Rs 22, 1½ hours), and APTDC organises tours on Sundays for Rs 200, subject to demand.

## Kondapalli

Situated strategically on the old Machilipatnam–Golconda trade route, **Kondapalli fort** (admission Rs 5; ☎ 10.30am–5pm) was built in 1360 by the Reddy kings, and was held by the Gajapathis, the Qutb Shahis, the Mughals and the nizams before becoming a British military camp in 1767. Today it's a quiet, lovely ruin. On weekdays, you'll likely have the place to yourself and you can easily spend a few hours hiking around. Kondapalli village, 1km downhill, is famous for its wooden dolls. The fort is 21km from Vijayawada; an autorickshaw costs Rs 300 return.

## TIRUMALA & TIRUPATHI

☎ 0877 / pop 302,000

The holy hill of Tirumala is one of the most visited pilgrimage centres in India – and indeed the world: it's said that Venkateshwara Temple eclipses Jerusalem, Rome and Mecca for sheer numbers of pilgrims.

There are never fewer than 5000 pilgrims here at any one time – the daily average is 40,000 and the total often reaches 100,000 – and *darshan* (deity viewing) runs around the clock. Temple staff alone number 12,000, and the efficient **Tirumala Tirupathi Devasthanams** (TTD; www.tirumala.org) administers the crowds. It also runs *choultries* (guesthouses) for pilgrims in Tirumala and Tirupathi, the service town at the bottom of the hill. The private hotels and lodges are in Tirupathi, so a fleet of buses constantly ferries pilgrims the 18km up and down the hill.

Tirumala is an engrossing place, but receives few non-Hindu visitors. The crowds can be overwhelming, but Tirumala somehow has a sense of serenity and ease about it and is worth a visit, even if you're not a pilgrim.

## Information

You'll find most of your worldly needs in Tirupathi, conveniently clustered around the bus station and, about 500m away, the train station. G Car St becomes Tilak Rd further from the train station.

**Apollo Pharmacy** (☎ 2252314; G Car St; ☎ 24hr)

Beware imposters.

**APTDC** (☎ 2289120; Sridevi Complex, Tilak Rd;

☎ 7am–9pm)

**Cloakrooms** (per day Rs 8; ☎ 24hr) At the train and bus stations.

**Cybermate** (☎ 3093968; Tilak Rd; per hr Rs 15;

☎ 8.30am–9.30pm)

**Net Hill** (TP Area; per hr Rs 15; ☎ 9am–9.30pm) Next to the bus stand.

**Police station** (☎ 2289006; Railway Station Rd)

## Sights

### VENKATESHWARA TEMPLE

Devotees flock to Tirumala to see Venkateshwara, an avatar of Vishnu. Among the many powers attributed to him is the granting of any wish made before the idol at Tirumala. Many pilgrims also donate their hair to the deity – in gratitude for a wish fulfilled, or to renounce ego – so hundreds of barbers attend to devotees. Tirumala and Tirupathi are filled with tonsured men, women and children.

Legends about the hill itself and the surrounding area appear in the Puranas, and the temple's history may date back 2000 years. The main **temple** is an atmospheric place, though you'll be pressed between hundreds of devotees when you see it. The inner sanctum itself is dark and magical; it smells of incense, resonates with chanting and may make you religious. There, Venkateshwara sits gloriously on his throne, inspiring bliss and love among his visitors. You'll have a moment to make a wish and then you'll be out again.

'Ordinary *darshan*' requires a wait of several hours in the claustrophobic metal cages ringing the temple. 'Special *darshan*' tickets (Rs 50) can be purchased a day in advance in Tirupathi. These come with a *darshan* time and get you through the queue faster.

Foreigners are advised to have VIP 'cellar' *darshan*, which involves minimal waiting. Bring your passport, a photocopy and Rs 100 to the Joint Executive Officer's (JEO) office at Tirumala, about 2km from the Tirupathi bus drop-off. The free red buses go here.

## Tours

If you're pressed for time, APTDC runs two-day tours (Rs 1550) to Tirumala from Hyderabad. KSTD (see p884) and TNTDC (see p1032) offer the same tours from Bengaluru and Chennai,

respectively. APTDC also has a full-day tour (Rs 300) of the many important temples in the Tirupathi area.

## Sleeping & Eating

Most non-Hindu visitors stay in Tirupathi, which has a range of good accommodation.

### TIRUMALA

Vast **dormitories** (beds free) and **guesthouses** (Rs 100-2500) surround the temple, but these are intended for pilgrims. If you want to stay, check in at the Central Reception Office, near the Tirumala bus stand, or reserve online at [www.ttdsevaonline.com](http://www.ttdsevaonline.com) (reservations not accepted for festivals).

Huge **dining halls** (meals free) in Tirumala serve thousands of meals daily to pilgrims. There are also veg restaurants serving meals for Rs 10.

### TIRUPATHI

Hotels are clustered around the bus stand (TP Area) and train station, which has nice **retiring rooms** (dm/r from Rs 45/150; 📞).

**Hotel Mamata Lodge** (📞 2225873; fax 2225797; 1st fl, 170 TP Area; s/d/tr/q Rs 150/250/300/300) A friendly, spic-and-pan cheapie. Some of the sheets are stained, but they're tucked in tight and lovingly patched with white squares. Avoid the downstairs lodge of the same name.

**Hotel Woodside** (📞 2284464; 15 G Car St; s/d incl breakfast from Rs 300/350; 📞) The cheerful Woodside has royal-blue walls and plaid curtains (unlike the dreary Woodside Annexe down the road). The restaurant downstairs has great, spicy meals (Rs 23) and lots of windows.

**Hotel Annapurna** (📞 2250666; 349 G Car St; d/tr/q from Rs 450/600/800; 📞) Rooms at the reigning best value in town are pink and clean and new. Since the hotel's on a corner (across from the train station), rooms are bright but noisy. AC rooms are at the back and therefore quieter.

**Hotel Sindhuri Park** (📞 2256430; [www.hotelsindhuri.com](http://www.hotelsindhuri.com); 119 TP Area; s/d from Rs 890/990; 📞 📺) Rooms at the professional Sindhuri Park are well appointed and have central AC; some have views of the Pushkarna Tank out the front.

**Hotel Universal Deluxe** (49 G Car St; mains Rs 20-50; 📞 5.30am-11.30pm) A bustling standby.

**Hotel Vikram** (📞 2225433; TP Area; mains Rs 20-65; 📞 5am-11pm) Excellent meals (Rs 22) and juices and full of happy families.

**Punjabi Dhaba** (📞 5560827; G Car St; mains Rs 30-75; 📞 7am-11pm) North Indian standbys and the delicious Special Punjabi Thali (Rs 60).

Other places to stay:

**Hotel Mayura** (📞 2225925; [mayura@nettlinx.com](mailto:mayura@nettlinx.com); 209 TP Area; r from Rs 750; 📞)

**Bhimas Deluxe** (📞 2225521; [www.bhimas.com](http://www.bhimas.com); 34-38 G Car St; r from Rs 850; 📞) Has light-wood furniture, soft lighting and fancy towel racks, but could use a lick of paint.

## Getting There & Away

It's possible to visit Tirupathi on a (very) long day trip from Chennai. If travelling by bus or train, you can buy 'link tickets', which include transport from Tirupathi to Tirumala.

### AIR

**Indian Airlines** (📞 2283992; Tirumala Bypass Rd; 🕒 10am-5.30pm), 2km outside of town, has daily flights to Hyderabad (US\$85, one hour). **Air Deccan** (📞 2285471) plies the same route daily for less. The easiest way to book either of these is with **Mitson Travels** (📞 2225981; 192 Railway Station Rd; 🕒 9am-7.30pm Mon-Sat, to 12.30pm Sun), across from the train station's 'parcel office'.

### BUS

Tirupathi's mega **bus station** (📞 2289900) has frequent buses to Chennai (Rs 55, four hours) and Hyderabad (deluxe/Volvo Rs 330/560, 12/10 hours). Tonnes of APSRTC and KSTDC buses go to Bengaluru (deluxe/Volvo Rs 178/275, six/five hours), and three buses head to Puttaparthi daily (Rs 132, eight hours).

Private buses depart from the TP Area, opposite the bus stand.

### TRAIN

Tirupathi station is well served by express trains. The **reservation office** (📞 2225850; 🕒 8am-8pm Mon-Sat, 8am-2pm Sun) is across the street.

## Getting Around

### BUS

Tirumala Link buses run out of two bus stands in Tirupathi: next to the main bus stand and outside the train station. The scenic 18km trip to Tirumala takes one hour (Rs 44 return); if you don't mind heights, sit on the left side for views. A prepaid taxi is Rs 250.

### WALKING

TTD has constructed probably the best footpath in India for pilgrims to walk up to Tirumala. It's about 15km and takes four to six hours. Leave your luggage at the toll gate at Alipiri near the Hanuman statue. It will be transported free to the reception centre. It's

## TRAINS FROM TIRUPATHI

Destination	Fare (Rs)	Duration (hr)	Daily Departures
Bengaluru	166/437/617(A)	7	2
Chennai	63/209(B)	3	3
Madurai	248/661/948(A)	12	4
Mumbai	357/975/1391(A)	24	1
Secunderabad	263/712/1061(A)	12	6
Vijayawada	201/510/708(A)	7	6

A – sleeper/3AC/2AC; B – 2nd/chair

best to walk in the cool of the evening, but there are shady rest points along the way, and a few canteens.

## AROUND TIRUMALA & TIRUPATHI

### Amelelumangapuram

A visit to Tirumala isn't technically complete until you've paid respect to Venkateshwara's consort, Padmavathi Devi, at her less crowded **temple** in Tiruchanur, 5km from Tirumala. Legend has it that Padmavathi once appeared on a lotus in the tank here. Prepaid taxis from Tirupathi train station, 30km away, cost Rs 350.

### Chandragiri Fort

Only a couple of buildings remain from this 15th-century **fort** (☎ 2276246; Indian/foreigner Rs 5/100; 🕒 8am-6pm), 14km west of Tirupathi. Both the Rani Mahal and the Raja Mahal, which houses a small **museum** (🕒 10am-5pm Sat-Thu), were constructed under Vijayanagar rule and resemble structures in Hampi's Royal Centre. There's a nightly **sound-and-light show** (admission Rs 30; 🕒 8pm Mar-Oct, 7.30pm Nov-Feb), narrated by Bollywood stars. Buses for Chandragiri (Rs 6) leave from outside Tirupathi train station every 15 minutes. A prepaid taxi is Rs 250 return.

### Sri Kalahasti

Around 36km east of Tirupathi, Sri Kalahasti is known for its **Sri Kalahasteswara Temple**, which derives its name from the legend of three animals that worshipped Shiva: a snake, spider and elephant.

Sri Kalahasti is also, along with Machilipatnam near Vijayawada, a centre for the ancient art of *kalamkari*. These paintings are made with natural ingredients: the cotton is primed with *myrabalam* (resin) and cow's milk; fig-

ures are drawn with a pointed bamboo stick dipped in fermented jaggery and water; and the dyes are made from cow dung, ground seeds, plants and flowers. You can see the artists at work in the Aghraharam neighbourhood, 2.5km from the bus stand.

Buses leave Tirupathi for Sri Kalahasti every 10 minutes (Rs 20, 45 minutes); a prepaid taxi is Rs 475 return.

### PUTTAPARTHI

☎ 08555

Prasanthi Nilayam (Abode of Highest Peace), in the southwestern corner of Andhra Pradesh at Puttaparthi, is the main ashram of Sri Sathya Sai Baba, who has a huge following in India and around the globe. He set up this ashram 40 years ago, and spends most of the year here.

### Sleeping & Eating

Most people stay at the **ashram** (☎ 287164; www.sathyasai.org), a small village with all amenities. Accommodation and food are cheap but very basic. Advance bookings aren't taken.

**Sri Pratibha Guest House** (☎ 289599; Gopuram St, 1st Cross; r from Rs 300) On an alley behind the canteen, Sri Pratibha is away from the chaos of Main Rd. Rooms are big, bright and airy.

**Sri Sai Sadan** (☎ 287507; Hanuman Temple Main Rd; r from Rs 600; 🍴) Spacious rooms have balconies with good views, but the roof-garden restaurant is the kicker.

**Sri Annapoorna Hotel** (meals Rs 18; 🕒 6am-10pm) Down the alley next to the bus station, Sri Annapoorna has great chai, tiffin and spicy meals.

**World Peace Café** (German Bakery; Main Rd; mains Rs 40-95; 🕒 7.30am-10.30pm) This breezy rooftop place has herbal teas, healthy foods and good filter coffee. Customers meditate at their



## THE GOD OF BIG THINGS

Many times a year, the population of Puttaparthi swells to more than 50,000. The drawcard, of course, is Sai Baba. Puttaparthi is his birthplace and where he established his main ashram, Prasanthi Nilayam.

It's difficult to overestimate the pulling power of this man who, aged 14, declared himself to be the reincarnation of Sai Baba, a saintly figure who died in 1918 (p804).

In November 2000 an estimated one million people gathered at the ashram to celebrate Sai Baba's 75th year. The massive gig resembled an Olympics opening ceremony. Sai Baba's elaborately adorned elephant, Sai Gita, led a procession of bands, dancing troupes and flag bearers from 165 countries. Many devotees regard Sai Baba as a true avatar.

Everything about Sai Baba is big: the Afro hairdo; the big name-devotees, including film stars, politicians and cricket superstar Sachin Tendulkar; and the money (millions of dollars) pumped into the nearby hospital, schools and university. And there's the big controversy. Allegations of sexual misconduct have led some devotees to lose faith. Others, however, regard such controversy as simply another terrestrial test for their avatar.

tables amidst saffron lassis and spirulina milkshakes.

**Bamboo Nest** (Chitravathi Rd, 1st fl; mains Rs 45-60; ☎ 9.30am-2pm & 4.30-9pm) This Tibetan place has a memorable veg wonton soup (Rs 35) and good *momos* (dumplings).

Other recommendations:

**Sai Towers** (☎ 287270; www.saitowers.com; Main Rd; s/d from Rs 485/1220) A swanky joint.

**Sai Krishna Italian Restaurant** (Samadhi Rd, ☎ 7am-1.30pm & 5-8.30pm; mains Rs 40-95)

## Getting There & Around

Puttaparthi is most easily reached from Bengaluru; eight KSRTC buses (deluxe/Volvo Rs 150/205, four hours) and six trains (sleeper/3AC/2AC Rs 145/351/478, three hours) head here daily. A *Rajdhani* train (3AC/2AC Rs 405/545, 2½ hours) runs four days a week. Booking for KSRTC buses is next to the bus station.

Uncomfortable APSRTC buses run to/from Tirupathi (Rs 132, eight hours, three daily) and Chennai (Rs 273, 12 hours, two daily), but for other destinations, the train's the way to go.

The bus station has a **train reservation booth** (☎ 8am-11.30pm & 3-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 8am-2pm Sun). For Hyderabad, an overnight train goes daily to Kacheguda (sleeper/3AC/2AC Rs 230/618/875, 10 hours), and a *Rajdhani* express goes to Secunderabad four days a week (3AC/2AC Rs 910/1230, 8½ hours). Overnight train 8564 runs to Visakhapatnam (sleeper/3AC/2AC Rs 33/120/1283, 20 hours), stopping at Vijayawada. The daily *Udyan Express* (6530) heads to Mumbai (sleeper/3AC/2AC Rs 330/901/1283, 21 hours).

Indian Airlines flies erratically from Mumbai (US\$121).

An autorickshaw to/from the train station is Rs 40.

## LEPAKSHI

About 65km from Puttaparthi is Lepakshi, site of the **Veerbhadra Temple**. The town gets its name from the Ramayana: when demon Ravana kidnapped Rama's wife, Sita, the bird Jatayu fought him but fell, injured, at the site of the temple. Rama called to him to get up: 'Lepakshi' derives from the Sanskrit for 'Get up, bird'.

Look out for the 9m-long monolithic Nandi bull – India's largest – at the town's entrance. From here, you can see the temple's Naga-lingam, a lingam crowned with a spectacular seven-headed cobra. The temple is known for its unfinished Kalyana Mandapam (Marriage Hall), which depicts the wedding of Parvati and Shiva, and its Natyamandapa (Dance Hall), with its carvings of dancing gods. The temple's most stunning feature, though, are the Natyamandapa's ceiling paintings.

Ramana, an excellent guide, brings the temple to life (Rs 100 is an appreciated offering). Bring plenty of small change for the inner sanctum.

To get here, take a Puttaparthi–Bengaluru bus and alight at Kodakonda Checkpost. From there, take a Gorantla–Hindupur bus (Rs 6) or an autorickshaw (Rs 250 return) to Lepakshi. The local Puttaparthi–Gorantla bus also stops at Lepakshi. A private car from Puttaparthi is Rs 900.

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