

Karnataka



If you're looking for variety in your Indian travel experience, Karnataka fits the bill nicely. The state's capital and international entry point is the IT powerhouse of Bengaluru (Bangalore), a modern, energetic city best savoured for its restaurants and shops. Ancient architectural gems are abundant, including the World Heritage-listed monuments of Hampi and Pattadakal. Practically untouched beaches and devout temple towns dot Karnataka's quiet tropical coast, while in the cool highlands of Kodagu (Coog) you can trek between lush coffee and spice plantations along paths trampled by migrating elephants.

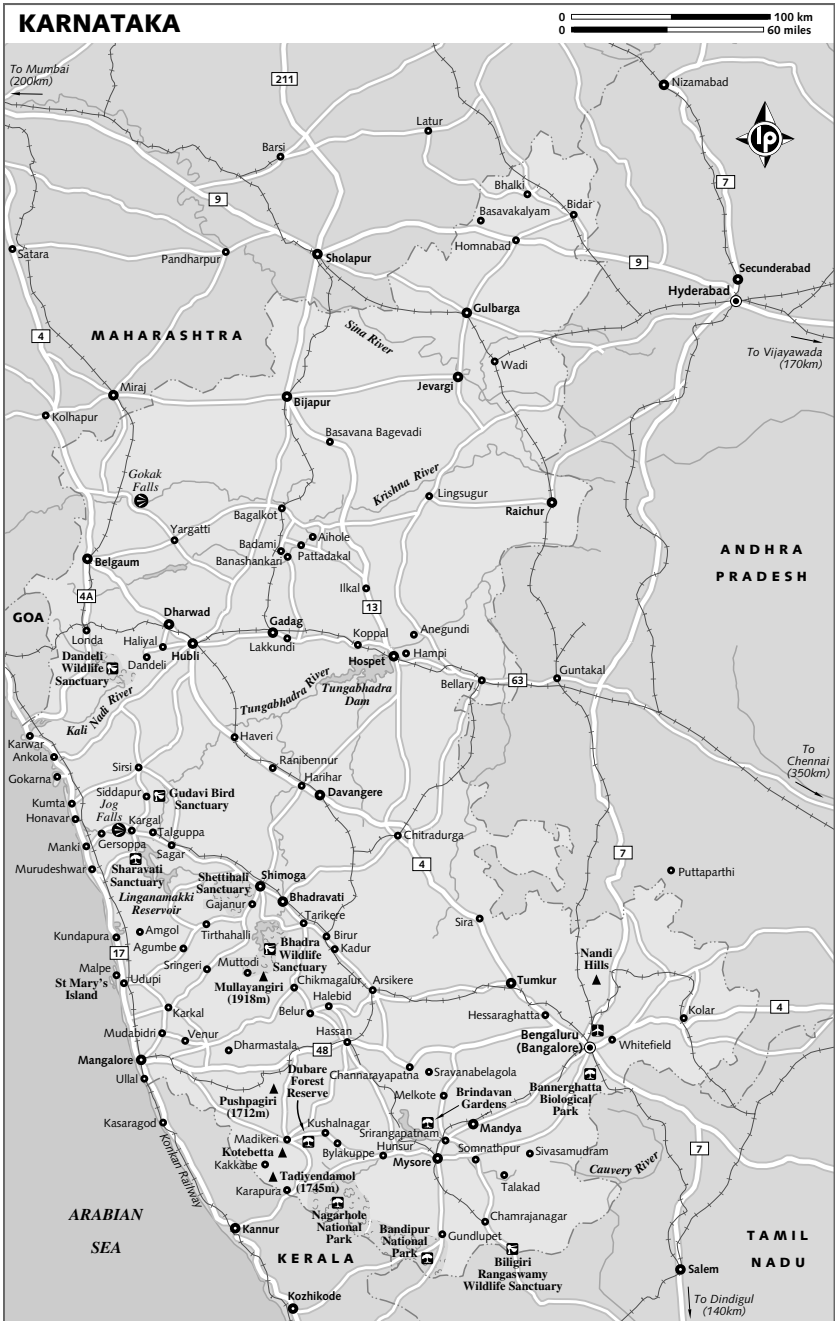
Bedecked in dazzling finery, elephants are also the stars of the show in Mysore's justly famous Dussarah celebrations. The royal city is the jewel in Karnataka's crown, home to a spectacular palace and an atmospheric fresh produce and spice market, as well an internationally renowned centre for yoga. Nearby are superbly crafted Hoysala temples dating from the 12th century and enormous Jain sculptures of Gomateshvara, not to mention the wildlife havens of Bandipur and Nagarhole National Parks, both part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve and home to elusive tigers.

The best time for touring is October to March, when the monsoon ceases lashing the coast and baking temperatures ease in far-northern interior towns such as Bijapur, with its beautiful South Indian Islamic architecture. And although the only thing that Karnataka lacks is snow-covered mountains, you'd still be wise to pack some warm clothes to beat off the winter chill in Bengaluru.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Be dazzled by the Maharaja's Palace and the technicolour Devaraja Market in **Mysore** (p894)
- Recharge your spirit in the lush, cool highlands of the **Kodagu region** (p905)
- Indulge in the abundant dining, drinking and shopping opportunities in **Bengaluru** (p881)
- Stride across the deserted ramparts of the huge 15th-century fort in **Bidar** (p933)
- Marvel at the gravity-defying boulders of **Hampi** (p919) and the ruins of the Vijayanagar empire
- Survey the sensuous carvings in the ancient caves and temples of **Badami** (p926)
- Hike over hills from the holy village of **Gokarna** (p916) to beautiful, undeveloped beaches





KARNATAKA

History

Religions, cultures and kingdoms galore have sashayed through Karnataka, from India's first great emperor, Chandragupta Maurya, who in the 3rd century BC retreated to Sravanabelagola after embracing Jainism, to Tipu Sultan who stood up against the encroaching British empire.

In the 6th century the Chalukyas built some of the earliest Hindu temples near Badami. Dynasties such as the Cholas and Gangas played important roles in the region's history, but it was the Hoysalas (11th to 14th centuries), who have left a lasting mark with their architecturally stunning temples at Somnathpur, Halebid and Belur.

In 1327, Mohammed Tughlaq's Muslim army sacked the Hoysala capital at Halebid, but in 1346 the Hindu empire of Vijayanagar annexed it. This dynasty, with its capital at Hampi, peaked in the early 1550s, then fell in 1565 to the Deccan sultanates. Bijapur then became the prime city of the region.

With Vijayanagar's demise, the Hindu Wodeyars (former rulers of Mysore state) quickly grew in stature. With their capital at Srirangapatnam, they extended their rule over a large part of southern India. Their power remained largely unchallenged until 1761 when Hyder Ali (one of their generals) deposed them. The French helped Hyder Ali and his son, Tipu Sultan, to consolidate their rule in return for support in fighting the British. However, in 1799, the British defeated Tipu Sultan, annexed part of his kingdom and put the Wodeyars back on Mysore's throne. This was the real kick off for British territorial expansion in southern India.

The Wodeyars ruled Mysore until Independence. They were enlightened rulers, and the maharaja became the first governor of the post-Independence state. The state boundaries were redrawn along linguistic lines in 1956 and thus the extended Kannada-speaking state of Mysore was born. This was renamed Karnataka in 1972, with Bangalore (now Bengaluru) as the capital. About 66% of the state's population speak Kannada as the main language; other significant languages are Urdu (10%) and Telugu (7.4%).

Information

The website of **Karnataka Tourism** (www.karnatakaturism.org) is generally more useful than the government tourist information centres around the state.

FAST FACTS

- Population: 52.7 million
- Area: 191,791 sq km
- Capital: Bengaluru (Bangalore)
- Main languages: Kannada, Urdu and Telugu
- When to go: October to March

If you're planning a visit to one of the state's several wildlife parks and reserves, it's worth contacting **Jungle Lodges & Resorts Ltd** (Map p885; ☎ 080-25597021; www.junglelodges.com; 2nd fl, Shringar Shopping Complex, MG Rd, Bengaluru; 🕒 10am-5.30pm), who organise safari and accommodation packages for Nagarhole and Bandipur National Parks, and several other reserves.

ACCOMMODATION

In Karnataka luxury tax is 4% on rooms costing Rs 151 to 400, 8% on those between Rs 401 and 1000, and 12% on anything over Rs 1000. Some midrange and top-end hotels may add a further service charge. Rates quoted in this chapter do not include taxes unless otherwise indicated.

SOUTHERN KARNATAKA

BENGALURU (BANGALORE)

☎ 080 / pop 5.7 million / elev 920m

Rebranded Bengaluru in November 2006, the city more commonly known as Bangalore is not an obvious charmer. The crazy traffic, associated pollution and creaking infrastructure of this IT boom town will fast drive you demotated. However, even though locals rarely sing Bengaluru's praises as a tourist destination, it's not a dead loss. There are a handful of interesting sights, the climate is benevolent, the city's reputation for green spaces is well deserved, and the youthful energy and imagination (not to mention disposable income) of the ITocracy fuels a progressive dining, drinking and shopping scene – one of the best in India, in fact.

History

Legend has it that Bengaluru (meaning "Town of Boiled Beans") got its name after an old woman served cooked pulses to a lost and hungry Hoysala king. In 1537 the feudal lord

FESTIVALS IN KARNATAKA

Udupi Paryaya (17 Jan; Udupi, p915) Held in even-numbered years, much procession and ritual marks the handover of swamis at the town's Krishna Temple.

Classical Dance Festival (Jan; Pattadakal, p929) Has some of India's best classical dance, without the crowds of Vasantahabba.

Tibetan New Year (Jan/Feb; Bylekuppe, p907) Lamas in the Tibetan refugee settlements, near Kushalnagar, take shifts leading the nonstop *pujas* (prayers) that span the week of Tibetan New Year celebrations, which also include special dances and a fire ceremony.

Vasantahabba (Feb; Nrityagram dance village, p894) The dance village of Nrityagram hosts this free festival featuring traditional and contemporary Indian dance and music.

Shivaratri Festival (Feb/Mar; Gokarna, p916) Two gargantuan chariots barrel down Gokarana's main street on 'Shiva power' as bananas are tossed at them for luck.

Muharram (Feb/Mar; Hospet, p925) This Shi'ia Muslim festival features fire walkers to the accompaniment of mass hoopla.

Vairamudi Festival (Mar/Apr; Melkote, p903) Lord Vishnu is adorned with jewels at Cheluvanarayana Temple, including a diamond-studded crown belonging to Mysore's former maharajas.

Karaga (Apr; Bengaluru, p881) Nine-day festival honouring the goddess Draupadi held at Dharmaraya Swamy Temple in Bengaluru (Bangalore). The highlight is a colourful procession led by a cross-dressed priest and accompanied by half-naked swordsmen.

Ganesh Chaturthi (Aug/Sep; Gokarna, p916) Families quietly march their Ganeshes to the sea at sunset.

Dussehra (Sep/Oct; Mysore, p897) One of India's great Dussehra festivals.

Kadalekayi Parishes (Nov; Bengaluru, p881) Groundnut farmers come from all over the region to the Bull Temple, seeking blessings for their harvests.

Vijaya Utsav (Nov; Hampi, p919) Traditional music and dance re-creates Vijayanagar's glory among Hampi's temples and boulders.

Manjunatheshwara (Nov; Dharmastala, p915) The Jain pilgrimage town has a lively festival season beginning with Diwali and including this three-day event.

Huthri (Nov/Dec; Madikeri, p906) The Kodavas celebrate the start of the season's rice harvests with ceremony, music, traditional dances and much feasting for a week, beginning on a full-moon night.

Laksha Deepotsava (Nov/Dec; Dharmastala, p915) Lakhs of lanterns light up this pilgrimage town in a fitting climax to its festival season.

Kemppegowda built a mud fort here, but it remained something of a backwater until 1759, when the city was gifted to Hyder Ali by the Mysore maharaja.

In 1809 the British Cantonment was established, and in 1831 the British moved their regional administrative base from Srirangapatnam to Bengaluru, renaming the city Bangalore in the process. Winston Churchill enjoyed life as a junior officer here, famously leaving a debt (still on the books) of Rs 13 at the Bangalore Club.

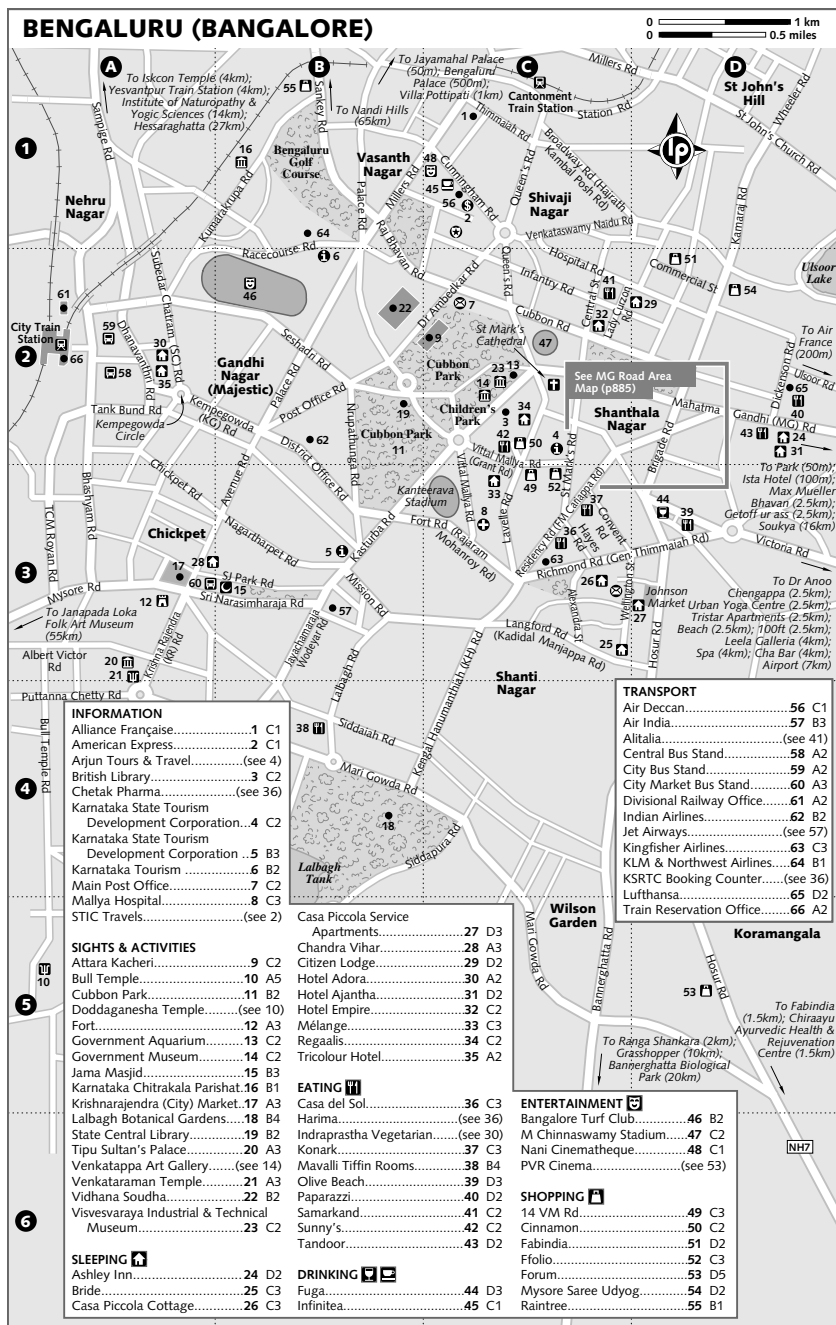
Bengaluru's reputation as a science and technology centre was established early in the 20th century; in 1905 it became the first city in India to have electric street lights. Since the 1940s it has been home to Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL), India's first aircraft manufacturing company. Today the city is best known as a hub for software and electronics development, and business process outsourcing.

Bengaluru's prosperity is changing the city in more ways than just its name. A new international airport is under construction and a new city centre is rising in a clutch of skyscrapers on the old United Breweries site at the Cubbon Park end of Vittal Mallya Rd (Grant Rd).

Orientation

Bengaluru is vast, but the two central areas of particular interest to travellers are Gandhi Nagar (the old part of town) and Mahatma Gandhi (MG) Rd (the heart of British-era Bangalore).

The Central bus stand and the City train station are on the edge of Gandhi Nagar. The crowded streets in this lively, gritty area – known locally as Majestic – teem with shops, cinemas and budget hotels. The Krishnarajendra (City) Market is here and a few remaining historical relics are to the south, including Lalbagh Botanical Gardens.



Some 4km east, the area bounded by MG, Brigade, St Mark's and Residency (FM Cariappa) Rds is Bengaluru's retail and entertainment hub. Here are parks, tree-lined streets, churches, grand houses and the army compounds that are integral to this military town. Between the two areas you'll find the golf club and racecourse, close to which are several top-end hotels.

Some Bengaluru streets are known better by the roads they intersect; 3rd Cross, Residency Rd, for example, refers to the third cross street on Residency Rd.

MAPS

The tourist offices (right) give out decent city maps. The excellent *Eicher City Atlas* is sold at Bengaluru's many bookshops (below).

Information

BOOKSHOPS

Crossword (Map p885; ACR Tower, Residency Rd;

☎ 10.30am-9pm Mon-Sat) Great selection of books, magazines, CDs and DVDs in modern surroundings.

Gangarams Book Bureau (Map p885; 72 MG Rd;

☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Sat) A mighty collection of books, plus stationery and postcards.

Premier Bookshop (Map p885; 46/1 Church St;

☎ 10am-1.30pm & 3-8pm Mon-Sat) It's tiny but somehow has everything; enter from Museum Rd.

CULTURAL CENTRES

Alliance Française (Map p883; ☎ 41231340; www.allfranceblr.com; 108 Thimmaiah Rd; ☎ 10am-1pm & 3-6pm Mon-Sat) French cultural hub offering courses, events, a café and a library.

British Library (Map p883; ☎ 22489220; www.britishcouncilonline.org; 23 Kasturba Rd Cross; ☎ 10.30am-6.30pm Mon-Sat) English newspapers, books and magazines, and free internet access for members (annual membership Rs 1000).

Max Mueller Bhavan (☎ 25205305; www.goethe.de/Bangalore; 716 CMH Rd, Indiranagar 1st Stage; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) Has a good café and a library of German titles. Also runs exhibitions and courses.

INTERNET ACCESS

As you'd expect for an IT city, internet cafés are plentiful as is wi-fi access in hotels.

LEFT LUGGAGE

Both the City train station (Map p883) and Central bus stand (Map p883), located either side of Gubbi Thotadappa Rd, have 24-hour cloakrooms (per day Rs 10).

MEDIA

City Info (www.explocity.com) is a bimonthly listings booklet that's available free from tourist offices and many hotels. The weekly national magazines *India Today* and the *Week* run monthly supplements on the city. Also check out the **Chillibreeze** (www.chillibreeze.com) ebook and travel section for useful information for expats setting up in the city.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Chetak Pharma (Map p883; ☎ 22212449; Basement, Devatha Plaza, Residency Rd; ☎ 9am-9pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-2pm Sun) Well-stocked pharmacy.

Dr Anoo Chengappa (☎ 9886006991; 602 12th Main, HAL 2nd Stage) Makes house calls.

Mallya Hospital (Map p883; ☎ 22277979; mallya hospital.net; Vittal Mallya Rd) With a 24-hour pharmacy.

MONEY

ATMs are common.

American Express (Map p883; ☎ 22254337; 180 Cunningham Rd; ☎ 9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-1.30pm Sat) Changes travellers cheques with no commission.

Thomas Cook (Map p885; ☎ 25581357; The Pavilion, 62-63 MG Rd; ☎ 9.30am-6pm Mon-Sat) Charges a Rs 50 commission on travellers cheques.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Digital services are easy to come by.

GG Welling (Map p885; 113 MG Rd; ☎ 9.30am-1pm & 3-7.30pm Mon-Sat)

GK Vale (Map p885; 89 MG Rd; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1.30pm & 4-8pm Sun) Locals' favourite.

POST

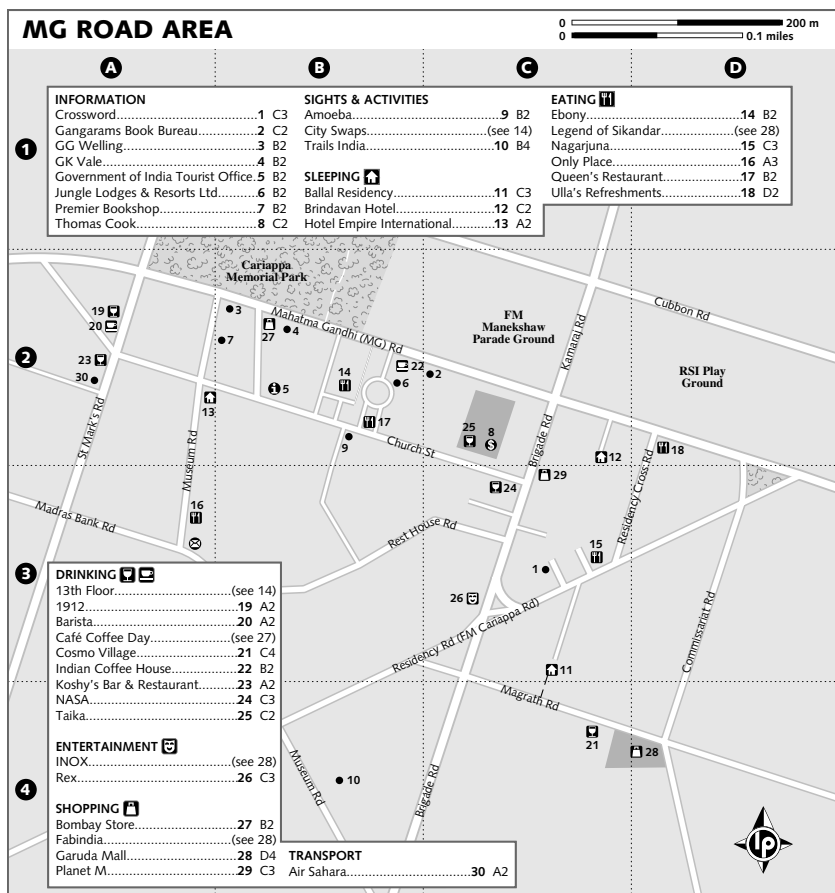
Main post office (Map p883; Cubbon Rd; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-4.30pm Sun).

TOURIST INFORMATION

Government of India tourist office (Map p885; ☎ 25585417; KFC Bldg, 48 Church St; ☎ 9.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat)

Karnataka State Tourism Development Corporation (KSTDC; Map p883; Badami House (☎ 22275883; Badami House, Kasturba Rd; ☎ 6.30am-10pm); Karnataka Tourism House (Karnataka Tourism House, 8 Papanna Lane, St Mark's Rd; ☎ 6.30am-10pm) For city and local tours; KSTDC also has offices at the City train station and the airport.

Karnataka Tourism (Map p883; ☎ 22352828; www.karnatakaturism.org; 2nd fl, 49 Khanija Bhavan, Racecourse Rd; ☎ 10am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, closed alternate Sat)



TRAVEL AGENCIES

Arjun Tours & Travel (Map p883; ☎ 22217054; www.arjuntours.com; 1st fl, Karnataka Tourism House, 8 Papanna Lane, St Mark's Rd; 🕒 9.30am-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-5pm Sat) Reliable place to book cars for longer journeys, and to buy transport tickets.

STIC Travels (Map p883; ☎ 2202408; www.stictravel.com; Imperial Court, 33/1 Cunningham Rd; 🕒 9.30am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat) Agents for STA Travel.

Sights

LALBAGH BOTANICAL GARDENS

Named for its profusion of red roses (Lalbagh means 'Red Garden'), **Lalbagh** (Map p883; ☎ 26579231; admission Rs 5; 🕒 dawn-dusk) rivals England's Kew Gardens. Laid out in 1760 by Hyder Ali, this 96-hectare park is a great place

to reconnect with nature; take one of Bangalore Walk's (p887) tours of the garden to discover more about the centuries-old trees and collections of plants from around the world. The main entrance is at the southern end of Kengal Hanumanthiah (KH) Rd; near here is the three-billion-year-old rock on which Kempegowda built one of Bengaluru's original watchtowers.

A beautiful glasshouse, modelled on the original Crystal Palace in London, is the venue for flower shows in the week preceding Republic Day (26 January) and the week before Independence Day (15 August).

BENGALURU PALACE

For an insight into the homelife of the Wodeyars (the current raja still lives here), take a

CENTRE OF THE FLAT WORLD

You won't spend long in Bengaluru (Bangalore) before someone tells you that this is the centre of the world. The city's reputation as the silicon-coated heart of IT India was cemented in 2005, when Pulitzer Prize-winning writer Thomas L Friedman got the inspiration for *The World Is Flat* after visiting Infosys' campus on Bengaluru's southern edge.

Infosys is one of Bengaluru's biggest success stories. Established by seven software engineers in 1981, the company today has over 66,000 employees and revenues of over US\$2100 million. Enter the Bengaluru campus (not open to the public) and it's as if you've slipped through a wormhole into an alternative India, where neatly trimmed lawns sprout shiny glass and steel structures. The workforce (average age 26) cycle or use electric golf carts to get around the 32-hectare campus, passing five food courts (serving 14 types of cuisine), banks, a supermarket, basketball court, putting green and state-of-the-art gyms. There's even a hotel!

The point of all this is to prove that Infosys (and by extension India) can compete on equal terms with the developed world – the level playing field of Friedman's 'flat world'. And with bumper-to-bumper traffic crawling along the highway outside, nowhere in Bengaluru seems to sum up the contradictions of modern India so succinctly.

peek inside **Bengaluru Palace** (☎ 23315789; Palace Rd; Indian/foreigner Rs 100/200, camera Rs 500; 🕒 10am–6pm). An aged retainer will guide you around the palace, which was designed to resemble Windsor Castle. Alongside many family photos, the sometimes lavish interiors are hung with a collection of nude portraits, adding a saucy note to the tour. The guards get touchy about photos being taken of the exterior.

KARNATAKA CHITRAKALA PARISHAT

This **visual-arts gallery** (Map p883; ☎ 22261816; www.chitralakalaparishath.com; Kumarakrupa Rd; admission Rs 10; 🕒 10am–6pm Mon–Sat) is Bengaluru's best. You'll see a wide range of Indian and international contemporary art, as well as the lavish gold-leaf work of Mysore-style paintings, and folk and tribal art from across the continent. There are also galleries devoted to Russian master Nicholas Roerich, whose vividly colourful paintings of the Himalayas are outstanding, and his son Svetoslav, who settled in India.

CUBBON PARK

Named after the former British commissioner Sir Mark Cubbon, the 120-hectare **Cubbon Park** (Map p883) is where the city breathes. Inside and on its fringes you'll find the red-painted Gothic-style **State Central Library**, two municipal museums, an art gallery and a bleak **Government Aquarium** (☎ 22867440; adult/child Rs 5/2; 🕒 10am–5.30pm Tue–Sun).

The mechanically minded will find plenty of interest at the quirky **Visvesvaraya Industrial & Technical Museum** (☎ 22864009; Kasturba Rd; admission Rs 15; 🕒 10am–6pm), which includes all manner

of electrical and engineering displays, from a replica of the Wright brothers' 1903 flyer to 21st-century virtual-reality games.

Next door, the **Government Museum** (☎ 22864483; Kasturba Rd; admission Rs 4; 🕒 10am–5pm Tue–Sun) houses a drably presented collection of stone carvings and relics, as well as some good pieces from Halebid. Your ticket is also valid for the attached **Venkatappa Art Gallery** (🕒 10am–5pm Tue–Sun), home to the surreal watercolour landscapes of Sri K Venkatappa (1887–1962), court painter to the Wodeyars.

At the northwestern end of Cubbon Park, the colossal neo-Dravidian-style **Vidhana Soudha**, built in 1954, houses the secretariat and the state legislature, and is floodlit on Sunday evenings. It's closed to the public, as is the neoclassical **Attara Kacheri**, opposite, which houses the High Court.

KRISHNARAJENDRA (CITY) MARKET & TIPU'S PALACE

For a pungent taste of traditional urban India, dive into this bustling wholesale fresh-produce **market** (Map p883; 🕒 6am–7pm) and the dense grid of commercial streets that surround it. This is the main Muslim area of the city and you'll also find several mosques here, including the impressively massive lilac-painted **Jama Masjid** (Map p883; Silver Jubilee Park Rd; admission free).

Head south along Krishna Rajandra (KR) Rd, under the elevated highway, and you'll pass the remains of the **fort** (Map p883) originally built by Kempegowda and rebuilt in stone in the 18th century by Hyder Ali. It's not open to the public. On the next block south is Tipu

Sultan's elegant and modest **palace** (Map p883; Albert Victor Rd; Indian/foreigner Rs 5/US\$2; ☎ 8am-6pm), notable for its teak pillars and frescoes – although it's not in as good condition as Tipu's beautiful palace in Srirangapatnam (p902).

Next to the palace is the ornate **Venkataraman Temple** (Map p883; KR Rd; ☎ 8.30am-6pm, closed alternate Sat).

BULL TEMPLE & DODDA GANESHA TEMPLE

Built by Kempegowda in the Dravidian style of the 16th century, the **Bull Temple** (Map p883; Bull Temple Rd, Basavangudi; ☎ 6am-1pm & 4-9pm) contains a huge granite monolith of Nandi and is one of Bengaluru's liveliest and most atmospheric. Nearby is the **Dodda Ganesha Temple** (Map p883; Bull Temple Rd, Basavangudi; ☎ 6am-1pm & 4-9pm), with an equally enormous Ganesh idol. Take bus 31, 31E, 35 or 49 to get there.

ISKCON TEMPLE

Built by the wealthy International Society of Krishna Consciousness (Iskcon), better known as the Hare Krishnas, this shiny **temple** (Hare Krishna Hill, Chord Rd; ☎ 7am-1pm & 4-8.30pm), 8km northwest of the town centre, is lavishly decorated in a mix of ultracontemporary and traditional styles. The Sri Radha Krishna Mandir blends souvenir selling with a stunning shrine to Krishna and Radha.

Activities & Courses

AYURVEDA & YOGA

Chirayu Ayurvedic Health & Rejuvenation Centre (☎ 25500855; 6th block, 17th D Main, Koramangala; ☎ 8.30am-6pm) provides longer-term therapies, as well as a day spa for walk-in relaxation. An hour-long massage costs Rs 700.

People come from around the world for the yoga and naturopathy programmes at the **Institute of Naturopathy & Yogic Sciences** (INYS; ☎ 23717777; Tumkur Rd, Jindal Nagar; per person per day from Rs 600). It's 20km northwest of Bengaluru.

Set on a 30-acre organic farm, **Soukya** (☎ 7945001; www.soukya.com; Soukya Rd, Samethanahalli, Whitefield; ☎ 6am-8.30pm) is an internationally renowned place offering a variety of holistic health programmes, including Ayurvedic treatments and yoga. Packages for two days and one night start at Rs 8900/13,800 for a single/double.

Ayurvedic therapists from Kerala staff **Spa** (☎ 5217239; www.theleela.com; Airport Rd ☎ 6.30am-9pm), a sleek centre with a wide variety of rejuvenation and detox treatments. Prices kick off at Rs 1600 for an hour's massage.

Stylish **Urban Yoga Centre** (☎ 32005720; www.urbanyoga.in; 100ft Rd, Indiranagar; ☎ 6.30am-9pm) has a smart yoga studio offering a range of classes, and sells yoga clothes, accessories and books.

OUTDOOR ADVENTURE

Getoff ur ass (☎ 51161600; www.getoffurass.com; 472, Sri Krishna Temple St; Indiranagar 1st Stage; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Sat) sells and rents out all you need for an outdoor-adventure expedition. It also runs a variety of reasonably priced hiking, rafting and kayaking trips in Karnataka and elsewhere in India.

Tours

Bangalore Walks (☎ 9845523660; www.bangalorewalks.com) Not to be missed! Sign up for one of the highly informative history or nature walks (Rs 495 including breakfast) and learn to love Bengaluru in a way that many locals have forgotten. Walks run from 7am to 11am every Saturday and Sunday.

City Swaps (Map p885; ☎ 65715056; www.cityswaps.in; 902 Barton Centre, 84 MG Rd; ☎ 10am-8pm Wed-Mon) Guides give a running commentary on open-top double-decker buses, which follow a 14km route around central Bengaluru. A two-hour tour is Rs 200; a day-long hop-on, hop-off ticket is Rs 300.

Karnataka State Tourism Development Corporation (KSTDC; Map p883; Badami House (☎ 22275883; Badami House, Kasturba Rd; ☎ 6.30am-10pm); Karnataka Tourism House (Karnataka Tourism House, 8 Papanna Lane, St Mark's Rd; ☎ 6.30am-10pm) Runs a couple of city tours, all of which begin at Badami House. The basic city tour runs twice daily at 7.30am and 2pm (ordinary/deluxe bus Rs 140/160), and a 16-hour tour to Srirangapatnam, Mysore and Brindavan Gardens departs daily at 7.15am (ordinary/deluxe bus Rs 435/560). KSTDC also has offices at the City train station and the airport.

Sleeping

As a major business destination, Bengaluru's accommodation is generally pricey and in short supply. The cheapest options (anything under Rs 500 a night) are near the bus stand and fill up quickly. Serviced apartments are frequently a better deal than many midrange (Rs 500 to 15,500) and top-end hotels. Wherever you stay, book as far ahead as possible.

BUDGET

Stacks of hotels line Subedar Chatram (SC) Rd, east of the bus stands and City train station. This neighbourhood is loud and seedy – women may not like it – but convenient if

you're in transit. If you're in Bengaluru longer than one night, consider staying closer to MG Rd. All hotels listed here have hot water, at least in the mornings.

Chandra Vihar (Map p883; ☎ 22224146; Avenue Rd; s/d from Rs 255/400; 📶) Convenient for the bazaar, which buzzes outside. Rooms are clean and spacious with TV and telephone; some have market views and balconies.

Hotel Adora (Map p883; ☎ 22872280; 47 SC Rd; s/d from Rs 280/380) One of the best of the SC Rd budget options. Downstairs is a good veg restaurant, Indraprastha Vegetarian.

Brindavan Hotel (Map p885; ☎ 25584000; 108 MG Rd; s/d from Rs 390/570; 📶) Book well in advance for this popular cheapie offering large decent rooms with balconies, and an astro-palmsist to fulfil other needs. Rates include taxes.

Hotel Ajantha (Map p883; ☎ 25584321; fax 25584780; 22A MG Rd; s/d from Rs 400/600; 📶) Old Indian tourism posters decorate the halls of this simple hotel, with a range of well-taken-care-of rooms in a semiquiet compound off MG Rd (ask for a room away from the parking lot).

Citizen Lodge (Map p883; ☎ 25591793; fax 25596811; 3/4 Lady Curzon Rd; r from Rs 450; 📶) The best rooms here are those facing on to the pretty garden at the back of the compound; they include rooms with AC and all the trimmings.

MIDRANGE

Hotel Empire (Map p883; ☎ 25592821; www.hotel-empireinternational.com; 78 Central St; s/d from Rs 695/920; 📶) Not too big a step up from the budget category, this appealing place offers bright rooms, friendly staff and constant hot water. Note the street – and the crowds who flock to the famous restaurant downstairs – can be noisy, as they are at the hotel's ritzier sister property, Hotel Empire International (Map p885; ☎ 25593743; 36 Church St), which is closer to MG Rd; prices at the Hotel Empire International start at Rs 1250/1650 for a single/double (including breakfast), and the hotel has internet access and AC.

Casa Piccola Serviced Apartments (Map p883; ☎ 22270754; www.casacottage.in; Wellington Park Apartments, Wellington St; r from Rs 1350; 📶) The Oberoi family, who also run the Casa Piccola Cottage, offer a range of equally pleasant one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments in this building and opposite the cottage on nearby Clapham Rd.

Ashley Inn (Map p883; ☎ 25352020; www.aranha-homes.com; 11 Ashley Park Rd; r from Rs 1400; 📶) This sweet guesthouse is seconds away from MG

Rd, and has eight pleasantly furnished rooms and a homy atmosphere. There's free wi-fi access. The management company also offers a range of serviced apartments.

Tricolour Hotel (Map p883; ☎ 41279090; www.newindiahotels.com; 15 Tank Bund Rd; s/d incl breakfast Rs 2000/2500; 📶) Part of a shopping mall and convenient for both bus and train stations, this new hotel brings a surprising touch of contemporary class to the area. Rates include breakfast.

ourpick Casa Piccola Cottage & Service Apartments (Map p883; ☎ 22270754; www.casacottage.in; 2 Clapham Rd; r from Rs 2000; 📶) This beautifully renovated 1915 cottage is a tranquil sanctuary from the madness of the city. Some of the studio rooms have kitchenettes for self-catering. Wi-fi access is available, and rates include breakfast served under a gazebo in the garden.

Ballal Residency (Map p885; ☎ 25597277; www.ballalgroup-hotels.com; 74/4 3rd Cross, Residency Rd; s/d Rs 2000/2600; 📶) Set back from the chaos, the Ballal offers big, sparkling clean rooms with all the mod cons, including wi-fi. Downstairs is a popular pure-veg restaurant and sweet shop.

Melange (Map p883; ☎ 22129700; www.melangeban-galore.com; 21 Vittal Mallya Rd; apt from Rs 2500; 📶) Occupying part of an apartment block just off Bengaluru's chicest shopping street, you can choose between economy apartments or upgraded ones with guaranteed electricity supply and lots of mod cons.

Villa Pottipati (☎ 23360777; www.neemranahotels.com; 142 8th Cross, 4th Main, Malleswaram; r from Rs 3000; 📶) An inconvenient location away from the centre is the only downside of this small colonial charmer. Raj era-style rooms come with antique furnishings, the gardens include a dunk-sized pool and service is very friendly.

Tristar Apartments (☎ 51185900; www.tristarapt.com; 1216 100ft Rd, HAL 2nd Stage, Indiranagar; apt studio/deluxe incl breakfast Rs 3750/4500; 📶) Handy for the business parks on this side of town, and the restaurants and bars of 100ft Rd, these appealing apartments are dressed in IKEA-style furnishings and have a Jacuzzi on the roof.

Bride (Map p883; ☎ 41144408; www.bridesuites.com; 5 Bride St, Langford Town; r incl breakfast from US\$99; 📶) Designed by a US architect and tastefully furnished, these suites are spacious and come with big lounges and kitchens that are shared between the rooms on each floor. There's a roof garden with a small gym.

Jayamahal Palace (☎ 23331321; www.jayamahalpalace.com; 1 Jayamahal Rd; s/d from US\$100/112; 🏠 📺) Originally built by Bangalore's British Resident, this cute palace is set in placid, green gardens. The cheapest rooms are in a new block; they're small but quite good. Some of the suites dazzle but the bathrooms can leave something to be desired.

Regaalis (Map p883; ☎ 411133111; www.regaalis.net; 40/2 Lavelle Rd; r from US\$115; 🏠 📺) Slick business hotels like this are sprouting like mushrooms in central Bengaluru. The Regaalis scores with a great location and pleasant decorative touches in the rooms (including massage chairs).

TOP END

Bengaluru has its Tajs (three of them!), its Oberoi and a host of other luxe hotels with matching price tags.

Ista Hotel (☎ 25558888; www.istahotels.com; 1/1 Swami Vivekananda Rd, Ulsoor; s/d from US\$350/370; 🏠 📺 🚿) Meaning 'Bliss', Ista delivers accommodation happiness in a cool, minimalist style. Smallish rooms offer sweeping vistas across Ulsoor lake and the city, and the bar and restaurant opening on to the rooftop pool are heavenly.

Park (Map p883; ☎ 25594666; www.theparkhotels.com; 14/7 MG Rd; r from US\$350; 🏠 📺 🚿) This Terence Conran-styled hotel is as swish as the vibrantly colourful row silk curtains coddling the lobby. Rooms are a little cramped but very fashionable. The hotel's i-bar and *magnifico* Italian restaurant i-talia are among the places to be seen in Bengaluru.

Eating

Bengaluru's delicious dining scene keeps pace with the whims and rising standards of its hungry, moneyed masses. Unless mentioned otherwise all restaurants are open from noon to 3pm, and 7pm to 11pm. If there's a telephone number, it's advisable to book.

MG ROAD AREA

All the following venues appear on Map p885.

Ulla's Refreshments (1st fl, Public Utility Bldg, MG Rd; mains Rs 40-70; ☎ 9am-10pm) Rise above the MG Rd crowds on Ulla's convivial terrace, where you can dig into simple, tasty North and South Indian fare. Thalīs (traditional South Indian and Gujerati 'all-you-can-eat' meal) kick off at Rs 65.

Queen's Restaurant (Church St; mains Rs 50-120) The rustic, tribal décor gives this cosy restaurant the atmosphere of an upmarket mud hut. The delicious Indian food draws in the customers.

Nagarjuna (44/1 Residency Rd; mains Rs 60-125) Not a place to linger, this fast-moving, constantly packed-out joint dishes up spicy-as-hell Andhra specialities on banana leaves.

Only Place (☎ 30618989; 13 Museum Rd; mains Rs 70-200) The burgers, steaks and yummy apple pie couldn't be tastier at this delightful semi-alfresco restaurant with a relaxed vibe.

Ebony (13th fl, Barton Centre, 84 MG Rd; mains Rs 90-275) Worth visiting for its terrace tables overlooking the city and its savoury mains of the Thai, French and Parsi varieties.

Legend of Sikandar (☎ 51252333; 4th fl, Garuda Mall, Magrath Rd; mains Rs 100-300) Serves Lucknowi, Hyderabadi and North Indian cuisine to general applause.

ELSEWHERE

Mavalli Tiffin Rooms (MTR; Map p883; Lalbagh Rd; dishes Rs 16-80; ☎ 6.30-11am, 12.30-2.45pm, 3.30-7.30pm & 8-9pm) MTR dishes up legendary *masala dosas* (curried vegetables inside a crisp pancake) for breakfast and tiffin (snacks). Be prepared to stand in line, especially for the thalis – a feast of 12 dishes for lunch and dinner.

Konark (Map p883; 50 Residency Rd; mains Rs 30-70) This place serves tasty Indian food in colourful, comfy surroundings. The lunchtime South Indian thali (Rs 75) is a gut buster; for something less filling, opt for the snack dishes, or eggless cakes and pastries.

Paparazzi (Map p883; ☎ 25584242; 10th fl, Royal Orchid Central Hotel, 47/1 Dickenson Rd; mains Rs 200-300) Spicy chicken kebabs (served on a flaming skewer) and decent caesar salads are served with sweeping city views at this supertrendy place. The Rs 200 set lunch is a good option.

Harima (Map p883; ☎ 41325757; 4th fl, Devatha Plaza, 131 Residency Rd; mains Rs 200-300) Practically a home-away-from-home for Bengaluru's expat Japanese, Harima is pretty much on the mark for its atmosphere and Japanese food, including sushi, noodles, tempura and more obscure dishes, such as *natto* (fermented bean sprouts).

Sunny's (Map p883; ☎ 22243642; 34 Vittal Mallya Rd; mains Rs 200-500) Beloved by the expat and well-to-do Indian set, Sunny's is like a little piece of California transplanted to downtown Bengaluru. The salads, pizzas and pastas are impressive, and the desserts downright sinful.

Casa del Sol (Map p883; ☎ 51510101; 3rd fl, Devatha Plaza, 131 Residency Rd; mains Rs 250; ☎ 11am-11pm) This is a relaxed Mediterranean-style bistro with a semalfresco area. Wednesday is disco night, Thursday has free salsa classes and Sunday has a good brunch (Rs 524) with lots of activities for kids.

Olive Beach (Map p883; ☎ 41128400; 16 Wood St, Ashoknagar; mains Rs 425-600) This spot duplicates the groovy Mediterranean style and deliciously authentic food of its Delhi and Mumbai (Bombay) sisters. Book ahead for the great Sunday brunch (Rs 1500) with free-flowing booze.

ourpick Grasshopper (☎ 26593999; 45 Kalena Agrahara, Bannerghatta Rd; 5-/7-course meals Rs 700/1000) You won't regret schlepping 15km south of the city centre to enjoy a delicious, relaxed meal at this restaurant-cum-fashion-boutique in a leafy residential setting. Husband and wife team Sonali and Himanshu design clothes, and fantastic fusion menus of five or seven set courses. Bookings are essential, with weekends being the busiest.

Also recommended:

Samarkand (Map p883; ☎ 41113364; Gem Plaza, Infantry Rd; mains Rs 100-250) For Peshawari cuisine and theatrical décor.

Tandoor (Map p883; ☎ 25584620; Centenary Bldg, 28 MG Rd; mains Rs 100-300) Consistently good tandoori, biryani (steamed rice with meat or vegetables) and kebab dishes.

Drinking

BARs & LOUNGES

For all its reputation as a 'pub city', Bengaluru is also an early-to-bed city with strict last orders at 11.30pm (unless mentioned opening time is 7.30pm). This said, the city does a nice line in plush lounge-type spaces for cocktails and nibbles. Typically the trendiest spots will have a cover charge on Friday or Saturday of around Rs 500 for a couple or a single guy and Rs 300 for women; the cover charge is often refundable against drinks or food.

Beach (1211 100ft Rd, HAL 2nd Stage, Indiranagar) Feel the sand between your toes – literally – at this fun beach-bums' bar in the happening Indiranagar area. Women drink for free on Wednesday.

Cosmo Village (Map p885; 29 Magrath Rd) Setting the Bengaluru lounge-bar standard, this place goes through more make-overs than Paris Hilton, yet still manages to remain popular with both locals and expats.

Fuga (Map p883; 1 Castle St, Ashoknagar) This eye-poppingly slick bar-club-lounge wouldn't look out of place in New York or London. DJ Sasha works the decks and absinthe is the mixer of choice in the cocktail lounge.

Koshy's Bar & Restaurant (Map p885; 39 St Mark's Rd; ☎ 9am-11.30pm) Locals love the British-school-dinner-style meals (mains Rs 50 to 250) dished up at this Bengaluru institution. Skip that and indulge in an unrushed beer in its buzzy, non-AC dining room.

NASA (Map p885; 1A Church St; ☎ 11am-11pm) The antithesis of hip, this old favourite is decked out like a spaceship. It's a trip, especially when those laser shows spark up.

1912 (Map p885; 40 St Mark's Rd) An older crowd hang out at this elegant option with a small courtyard. It's a good spot for a quiet drink, until the DJ – or sometimes a live band – gets things moving later on.

Taika (Map p885; 206-209 The Pavilion, 62-63 MG Rd; ☎ 12.30-3pm & 7.30-11.30pm) This so-called spa lounge offers Ayurvedic food, although it wasn't available when we visited. Really it's just a cool place to twizzle your cocktail stick in a slick rooftop setting. There's a disco at the back.

13th Floor (Map p885; 13th fl, Barton Centre, 84 MG Rd) Come early to grab a spot on the balcony, with all of Bengaluru glittering at your feet. The atmosphere is that of a relaxed cocktail party.

CAFÉS & TEAHOUSES

Bengaluru is liberally sprinkled with good chain cafés, such as **Café Coffee Day** (Map p885; MG Rd; ☎ 8am-11.30pm) and **Barista** (Map p885; 40 St Mark's Rd; ☎ 8am-11.30pm). For something a bit different try one of the following.

Indian Coffee House (Map p885; 78 MG Rd; ☎ 8.30am-8.30pm) Waiters in turbans and fabulous buckled belts dish out South India's best java at this charming old-timer with yellowing formica table tops.

Infinitea (Map p883; www.infini-tea.com; 2 Shah Sultan Complex, Cunningham Rd; ☎ 10.45am-11pm) Infinitea is an amiable modern teahouse that offers a great range of infusions from across the subcontinent. It's also an ideal spot for lunch and snacks.

Cha Bar (Oxford Bookstore, Leela Galleria, Airport Rd; ☎ 10am-10pm) Offering more than 20 different types of tea, Cha Bar allows you to hunker down with a book or magazine from the attached bookshop.

Entertainment

BOWLING

Amoeba (Map p885; ☎ 25594631; 22 Church St; ⌚ 11am-11pm) A date with the lanes at this state-of-the-art bowling alley costs Rs 80 to 125 per person, depending on the time of day.

CINEMA

English-language films are popular; tickets are around Rs 60, rising to Rs 220 at the multiplexes.

INOX (Map p885; ☎ 41128888; www.inox.com; 5th fl; Garuda Mall, Magrath Rd)

Nani Cinematheque (Map p883; ☎ 22356262; www.collectivechaos.org/nani.html; 5th fl, Sona Tower, 71 Millers Rd) Classic Indian and European films are screened Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

PVR Cinema (Map p883; ☎ 22067511; www.pvrcinemas.com; Forum, 21 Hosur Rd) Megacinema with 11 theatres.

Rex (Map p885; ☎ 25587350; 12/13 Brigade Rd) Has regional films, too.

SPORT

Bengaluru's winter horse-racing season runs from November to February, and its summer season is from May to July. Races are generally held on Friday and Saturday afternoons. Contact the **Bangalore Turf Club** (Map p883; ☎ 22262391; www.bangaloreraces.com; Racecourse Rd) for details.

For a taste of India's sporting passion up close, attend one of the regular cricket matches at **M Chinnaswamy Stadium** (Map p883; ☎ 22869970; MG Rd). A range of tickets (Rs 50 to 500) is sold on the day, though there are inevitably queues. A good seat in a not-too-crowded area costs about Rs 250. The **Karnataka Cricket Association** (☎ 22869631) has the spin.

THEATRE

Ranga Shankara (☎ 26592777; www.rangashankara.org; 36/2 8th Cross, JP Nagar) All kinds of interesting theatre (in a variety of languages) and dance are held at this cultural centre.

Shopping

Bengaluru's shopping options are abundant, ranging from teeming bazaars (see p886) to glitzy malls. Some good shopping areas include Commercial St (Map p883), Vittal Malya Rd (Map p883) and MG Rd (Map p885) between St Mark's and Brigade Rds.

Cinnamon (Map p883; 11 Walton Rd; ⌚ 10.30am-8.15pm) Just off Lavelle Rd, Cinnamon is a chic boutique for clothes, homewares and gifts – perfect for stylish souvenirs.

Fabindia (☎ 25532070; 54 17th Main; ⌚ 10am-8pm) This flagship shop contains Fabindia's full range of stylish clothes and homewares in traditional cotton prints and silks. There's also a small café. From Hosur Rd, make a left at the mosque about 1km past the Forum; Fabindia is on the right. There are also branches on Commercial St (Map p883) and in the Garuda mall (Map p885; McGrath Rd).

100ft (☎ 25277752; 777/1, 100ft Rd, HAL 2nd Stage, Indiranagar; ⌚ 11am-11pm) An appealing boutique for colourful clothes, interior design and handicrafts; it also has a restaurant and bar.

Raintree (Map p883; 4 Sankey Rd; ⌚ 10am-7pm Mon-Sat, 11am-6pm Sun) This early-20th-century villa has been turned into a stylish gift shop, fashion shop and café; it includes a branch of fab clothes shop Anokhi, which is also found at the Leela Galleria (23 Airport Rd, Kodihalli).

14 VM Rd (Map p883; 14 Vittal Mallya Rd) This classy boutique complex showcases top Indian designers, including Abraham & Thakore, Manish Arora and Neeru Kumar.

Ffolio (Map p883; 5 Vittal Mallya Rd) Head to this shop for high Indian fashion. Ffolio also has a branch at Leela Galleria (23 Airport Rd, Kodihalli).

Bombay Store (Map p885; 99 MG Rd; ⌚ 10.30am-8.30pm) This is a one-stop option for gifts ranging from ecobeauty products to linens.

Planet M (Map p885; 9 Brigade Rd; ⌚ 10.30am-9pm) Try this shop for all kinds of recorded music and movies.

Mysore Saree Udyog (Map p883; 1st fl, 294 Kamaraj Rd; ⌚ 10.30am-8.30pm Mon-Sat) Located near Commercial St, Mysore Saree Udyog is great for top-quality silks and saris.

Bengaluru's malls include **Garuda** (Map p885; McGrath Rd), **Forum** (Map p883; Hosur Rd, Koramangala) and **Leela Galleria** (23 Airport Rd, Kodihalli).

Getting There & Away

AIR

Airline offices are generally open from 9am to 5.30pm Monday to Saturday, with a break for lunch. Domestic carriers serving Bengaluru include the following:

Air Deccan (Map p883; ☎ 39008888, call centre 9845777008; 35 Cunningham Rd)

Air Sahara (Map p885; ☎ 22102777; 39 St Mark's Rd)

Indian Airlines (Map p883; ☎ 25226233; Housing Board Bldg, Kempegowda Rd)

Jet Airways (Map p883; ☎ 25550856, call centre 25221929; Unity Bldg, Jayachamaraja Wodeyar Rd)

DAILY FLIGHTS FROM BENGALURU

Destination	One-way price (US\$)	Duration (hr)
Ahmedabad	153	3½
Chennai (Madras)	51	¾
Delhi	183	2½
Goa	75	1½
Hyderabad	81	1
Kochi	60	1
Kolkata (Calcutta)	192	2½
Mangalore	102	¾
Mumbai (Bombay)	99	1½
Pune	102	1½
Trivandrum	60	1

Kingfisher Airlines (Map p883; ☎ 41979797; UB Anchorage, Richmond Rd)

Spice Jet (☎ 1800 180 333, 0987-180333; www.spicejet.com)

There are daily flights to the places listed on above.

Some of Bengaluru's international airline offices:

Air France (☎ 25589397; Sunrise Chambers, 22 Ulsoor Rd)

Air India (Map p883; ☎ 22277747; Unity Bldg, Jayachamaraja Wodeyar Rd)

Alitalia (Map p883; ☎ 25591936; 66 Infantry Rd)

British Airways (☎ 1800 180 1213, 1800 102 1213) All booking enquiries can be made on these toll-free numbers.

KLM & Northwest Airlines (Map p883; ☎ 22268703; Taj West End, Racecourse Rd)

Lufthansa (Map p883; ☎ 25588791; 44/2 Dickenson Rd)

BUS

Bengaluru's huge, well-organised **Central bus stand** (Map p883; Gubbi Thotadappa Rd) is directly in front of the City train station. **Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation** (KSRTC; ☎ 22870099) buses run throughout Karnataka and to neighbouring states; the Rajahamsa is its comfortable deluxe model. Other interstate bus operators:

Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (APSRTC; ☎ 22873915)

Kadamba Transport Corporation (☎ 22351958) Goa. **State Express Transport Corporation** (SETC; ☎ 22876974) Tamil Nadu.

Computerised advance booking is available for most buses at the station; **KSRTC** (Map p883; Devantha Plaza, Residency Rd) also has convenient booking counters around town, including one at Devantha Plaza. It's wise to book long-distance journeys in advance.

Numerous private bus companies offer cheaper and only slightly more expensive services. Private bus operators (Map p883) line the street facing the Central bus stand, or you can book through an agency (see p885).

Major KSRTC bus services from Bengaluru are listed on below.

TRAIN

Bengaluru's **City train station** (Map p883; Gubbi Thotadappa Rd) is the main train hub and the place to make reservations. **Cantonment train station** (Map p883; Station Rd) is a sensible spot to disembark if you're arriving and headed for the MG Rd area, while **Yesvantpur train station** (Rahman Khan Rd), 8km northwest of downtown, is the starting point for Goa trains.

MAJOR BUS SERVICES FROM BENGALURU

Destination	Fare (Rs)	Duration (hr)	Frequency
Chennai	222 (R)/455 (V)	6-8	15 daily
Ernakulum	460 (R)/610 (V)	14	16 daily
Hampi	275 (R)	9	1 daily
Hyderabad	360 (R)/625 (V)	10-12	25-plus daily
Jog Falls	300 (D)	8-9	1 daily
Mumbai	961 (V)	18	2 daily
Mysore	125 (R)/155 (V)	2½-3½	25-plus daily
Ooty	225 (R)	8	6 daily
Panaji	458 (R)/656 (V)	11-15	3 daily
Puttaparthi	175 (V)	4	3 daily

D – semideluxe/regular, R – Rajahamsa, V – Volvo AC

MAJOR TRAINS FROM BENGALURU

Destination	Train No & Name	Fare (Rs)	Duration (hr)	Departures
Chennai	2608 <i>Lalbagh Exp</i>	118/392	5½	6.30am
	2640 <i>Brindavan Exp</i>	118/392	6	2.30pm
	2008 <i>Shatabdi</i>	580/1105	5	4.15pm Wed-Mon
Delhi	2627 <i>Karnataka Exp</i>	559/1517/2160	42	6.40pm
	2429 <i>Rajdhani</i>	2105/2840	35	8pm Mon, Wed, Thu & Sun
Hospet	6592 <i>Hampi Exp</i>	203/765/881	9½	10.15pm
Hubli	2079 <i>Jan Shatabdi</i>	147/485	7	6am Wed-Mon
Kolkata	2509 <i>Guwahati Exp</i>	605/1646/2247	37	11.30pm Wed, Thu & Fri
Mumbai	6530 <i>Udyan Exp</i>	377/1031/1472	24	8pm
Mysore	6222 <i>Mysore Exp</i>	70/228	3	5.10am
	2614 <i>Tipu Exp</i>	70/228	2½	2.15pm
	6216 <i>Chamundi Exp</i>	61/198	3	6.15pm
	2007 <i>Shatabdi</i>	305/590	2	11am Wed-Mon
Trivandrum	6526 <i>Kanniyakumari Exp</i>	330/901/1283	17	9.45pm

Rajdhani fares are 3AC/2AC; *Shatabdi* fares are chair/executive; *Jan Shatabdi* fares are 2nd/chair; and express (Exp) fares are 2nd/chair for day trains and sleeper/3AC/2AC for night trains.

Rail reservations in Bengaluru are computerised. If your train is fully booked, it's usually possible to get into the emergency quota; first, buy a wait-listed ticket, then fill out a form at the **Divisional Railway Office** (Map p883; Gubbi Thotadappa Rd) building immediately north of the City train station. You find out about 10 hours before departure whether you've got a seat (a good chance); if not, the ticket is refunded. The **train reservation office** (☎ 139; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Sat, 8am-2pm Sun), on the left as you face the station, has separate counters for credit-card purchases (Rs 30 fee), women and foreigners. Luggage can be left at the 24-hour cloakroom on Platform 1 at the City train station (from Rs 10 per bag per day).

See above for information on major train services.

Getting Around**TO/FROM THE AIRPORT**

The airport is about 9km east of the MG Rd area. Prepaid taxis can take you from the airport to the city (Rs 190), but in the other direction you'll probably have to haggle for a price. An autorickshaw will set you back about Rs 60. Bus 333 goes from the City bus stand to the airport (Rs 15, 45 minutes).

A new international **airport** (www.bialairport.com) is scheduled to open in April 2008.

AUTORICKSHAW

The city's autorickshaw drivers are legally required to use their meters. After 10pm, 50% is added onto the metered rate, but you'll usually have to negotiate a fare. Flag fall is Rs 10 and then Rs 5 for each extra kilometre. There's a prepaid autorickshaw stand outside the City train station, as well as a couple along MG Rd and outside the Garuda Mall. From the City train station to MG Rd costs Rs 30.

BUS

Bengaluru has a thorough but often crowded local bus network. Pickpockets abound and locals warn that solo women should think twice about taking buses after dark. Most local buses (light blue) run from the City bus stand (Map p883), next to the Central bus stand; a few operate from the City Market bus stand (Map p883) to the south.

To get from the City train station to the MG Rd area, catch any bus from Platform 17 or 18 at the City bus stand. For the City market, take bus 31, 31E, 35 or 49 from Platform 8.

CAR

Plenty of places around Bengaluru offer car rental with driver or (if you're fearless) self-drive. Standard rates for a Hindustan Motors Ambassador car are Rs 5.5 per kilometre for a

minimum of 250km, plus an allowance of Rs 125 for the driver (a total of Rs 1375 per day). For an eight-hour rental of a Tata Indicar with a driver you're looking at around Rs 850.

We recommend:

Cabs Den (☎ 22483879)

Jyothi Car Rentals (☎ 9845007535, 9845212079)

Mr Gopalan (☎ 9845089554)

AROUND BENGALURU

Bannerghatta Biological Park

The attached zoo is a little grim, but it's well worth making the 25km trek south of Bengaluru to this **nature reserve** (☎ 080-27828425; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Wed-Mon) to take its hour-long **grand safari** (weekday/weekend Rs 85/110; ☎ 11am to 4pm) in a minibus through an 11,330-hectare enclosure. Here the Karnataka Forest Department is rehabilitating 34 tigers (including two white ones) and 11 lions rescued from circuses.

It's an easy half-day trip from Bengaluru, but if you want to stay over, **Jungle Lodges & Resorts Ltd** (Map p885; ☎ 080-25597021; www.junglelodges.com; 2nd fl, Shringar Shopping Complex, MG Rd, Bengaluru; ☎ 10am-5.30pm) has some log huts here. On the way out or back you could also visit the excellent restaurant and boutique Grasshopper (p890). Bus 366A from City Market runs here (Rs 20, one hour).

Wonder La

Wonder La is a brand-new **water park** (www.wonderla.com; adult/child/senior/disabled Mon-Fri Rs 430/330/280/320, Sat, Sun & hols 540/400/350/400; ☎ 11am-7pm Mon-Fri, 11am-8pm Sat, Sun & hols) located just under 30km from Bengaluru along the Bengaluru-Mysore highway. The massive park offers dozens of water and 'dry' rides.

Hessaraghatta

Located 30km northwest of Bengaluru, Hesaraghatta is home to **Nrityagram** (☎ 080-28466313; www.nrityagram.org; ☎ 10am-5.30pm Tue-Sat, 10am-3pm Sun), the living legacy of celebrated dancer Protima Gauri Bedi, who died in a Himalayan avalanche in 1998. Protima established this dance academy in 1989 to revive and popularise Indian classical dance.

Designed in the form of a village by Goa-based architect Gerard da Cunha, the attractive complex offers the long-term study of classical dance within a holistic curriculum. Local children are taught for free on Sunday. Self-guided tours cost Rs 20 or you can call ahead to book a tour, lecture-cum-demonstra-

tion and vegetarian meal (Rs 850, minimum 10 people). A month-long beginners' workshop is held in July for US\$1000. Earmark the first Saturday in February for the free dance festival **Vasantahabba** (p882).

Opposite the dance village, **Taj Kuteeram** (☎ 080-22252846; www.tajhotels.com; r from Rs 4300; ♿) combines comfort with rustic charm. It offers Ayurveda and yoga sessions.

Learn how to drive a bullock cart and how to milk a cow at **Our Native Village** (☎ 9880999924; www.ournativevillage.com; Survey 72, Kodihalli, Madurai Hobli; s/d incl full board Rs 3750/4500; ♿), an ecofriendly organic farm and resort. The resort generates its own power, harvests rainwater, and processes and reuses all its waste.

From Bengaluru's City Market, buses 253, 253D, 253E run to Hesaraghatta (Rs 20, one hour), with bus 266 continuing on to Nrityagram.

Nandi Hills

Rising to 1455m the **Nandi Hills** (admission Rs 5; ☎ 6am-10pm), 60km north of Bengaluru, were once the summer retreat of Tipu Sultan. It's a good place for hiking with stellar views and two notable **Chola temples**. Avoid weekends if you like your nature quiet. A recommended retreat out here is **Silver Oak Farm** (☎ 9342510445; www.silveroakfarm.com; Sultanpet Village; s/d incl full board from Rs 2250/3250), which has a beautiful hillside position. Buses head to Nandi Hills (Rs 40, two hours) from Bengaluru's Central bus stand.

Janapada Loka Folk Arts Museum

HL Nage Gowda spent decades researching the folk arts and native cultures of the region. The fruits of his labours are on display at this engaging **museum** (☎ 08113-72701143; admission Rs 10; ☎ 9am-1.30pm & 2.30-5.30pm Wed-Mon), 53km southwest of Bengaluru, which is worth a brief pause if you're driving towards Mysore. Displayed items include 500-year-old shadow puppets, festival costumes and instruments. There's an attached restaurant. Mysore-bound buses (one hour) will get you here; ask to be dropped 3km after Ramanagaram.

MYSORE

☎ 0821 / pop 950,000 / elev 707m

It's not difficult to divine Mysore's charismatic appeal. The historic seat of the Wodeyar maharajas is easy to get around, has a good climate and works hard to promote its regal heritage. Famous for its traditional

painting and its silk, sandalwood and incense production, Mysore is now promoting itself as an international centre for Ashtanga yoga. Whether you choose to stretch your body in a traditional yoga pose or take more gentle exercise strolling through the city's magnificent palace and colourful market, Mysore is one Indian city that rewards a slower pace.

History

Mysore was named after the mythical Mahisuru, where the goddess Chamundi slew the demon Mahishasura. The Mysore dynasty was founded in 1399, but up until the mid-16th century its rulers, the Wodeyars, were in the service of the Vijayanagar emperor. With the fall of the empire in 1565, the Mysore rulers were among the first to declare their independence.

Apart from a brief period in the late 18th century when Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan usurped the throne, the Wodeyars continued to rule until Independence in 1947. In 1956 when the new state was formed, the former maharaja was elected governor.

Orientation

The train station is northwest of the city centre, about 1km from the main shopping street, Sayyaji Rao Rd. The Central bus stand is on Bengaluru–Mysore (BM) Rd, on the north-eastern edge of the city centre. The Maharaja's Palace occupies the entire southeastern sector of the city centre. Chamundi Hill is an ever-visible landmark to the south.

Information

ATMs and internet cafés are sprinkled around town.

BOOKSHOPS

Ashok Book Centre (396 Dhanvanthri Rd; ☎ 9.30am–9pm Mon–Sat, 10am–2.30pm Sun)

Geetha Book House (KR Circle; ☎ 10am–1pm & 5–8pm Mon–Sat) On Krishnajara (KR) Circle.

Sauharda Bookstore (1683 Hanumantha Rao St; ☎ 9.30am–1.30pm & 4.30–8.30pm Mon–Sat)

LEFT LUGGAGE

The City bus stand has a cloakroom open from 6am to 11pm; it costs Rs 10 per bag per 12 hours.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Basappa Memorial Hospital (☎ 2512401; 22B Vinoba Rd, Jayalakshimpuram)

MONEY

State Bank of Mysore Nehru Circle (☎ 2538956; cnr Irwin & Ashoka Rds; ☎ 10.30am–2.30pm & 3–4pm Mon–Fri, 10.30am–12.30pm Sat); Sayyaji Rao Rd (☎ 2445691; 10.30am–2.30pm Mon–Fri, 10.30am–12.30pm Sat) Changes cash and Amex travellers cheques.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Rekha Colour Lab (142 Dhanvanthri Rd; ☎ 9am–9.30pm) For digital needs.

POST

Main post office (cnr Irwin & Ashoka Rds; ☎ 10am–6pm Mon–Sat, 10.30am–1pm Sun)

TOURIST INFORMATION

Karnataka Tourism (☎ 2422096; Old Exhibition Bldg, Irwin Rd; ☎ 10am–5.30pm Mon–Sat) Unusually helpful.

KSTDC Transport Office (☎ 2423652; 2 Jhansi Lakshmi Bai Rd; ☎ 6.30am–8.30pm) KSTDC has counters at the train station and Central bus stand, as well as this transport office next to KSTDC Hotel Mayura Hoysala.

Sights

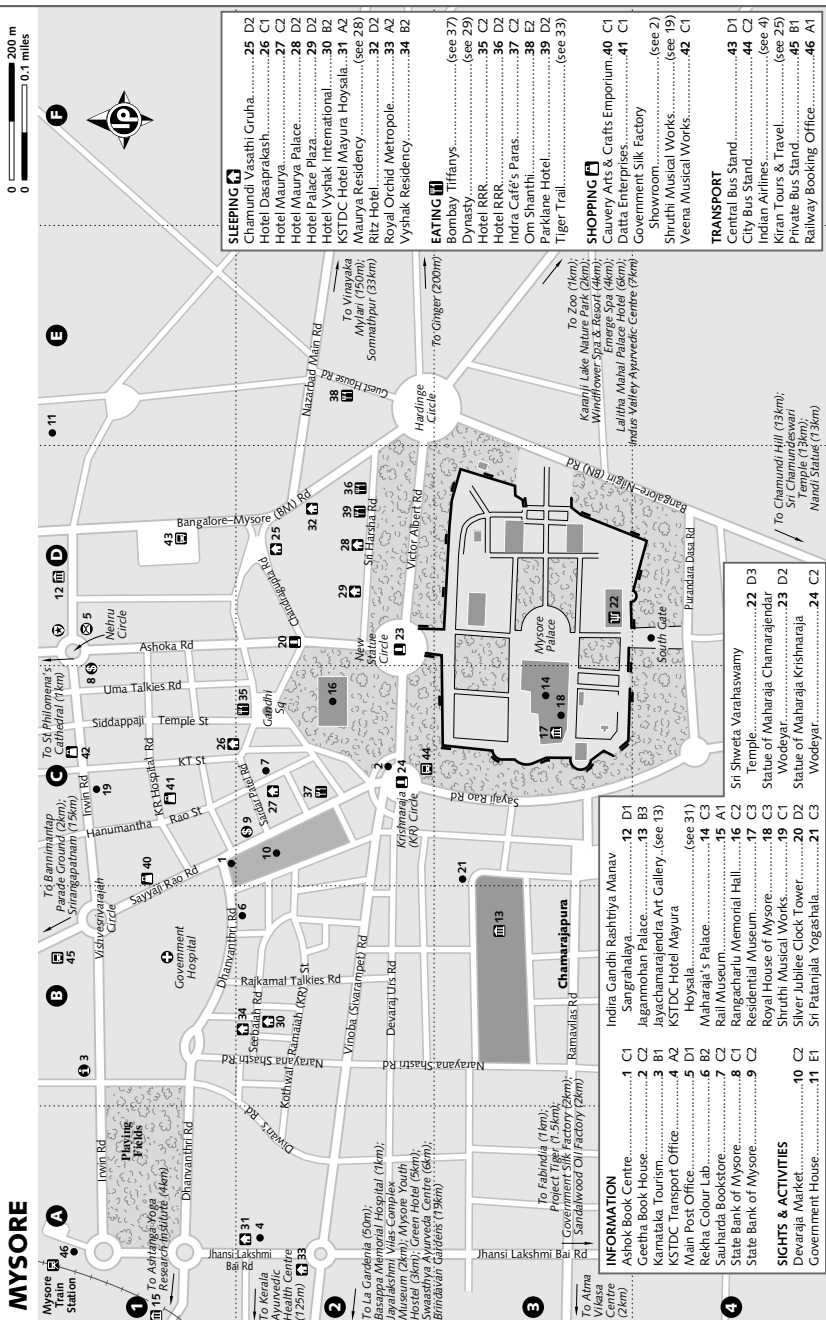
MAHARAJA'S PALACE

The fantastic profile of this walled Indo-Saracenic **palace** (Mysore Palace; ☎ 2434425; www.mysorepalace.org; admission Rs 20, camera Rs 5; ☎ 10am–5.30pm), the seat of the maharajas of Mysore, graces the city's skyline. An earlier palace burnt down in 1897 and the present one, designed by English architect Henry Irwin, was completed in 1912 at a cost of Rs 4.5 million.

The palace's interior – a kaleidoscope of stained glass, mirrors and gaudy colours – is undoubtedly over the top, but it includes awe-inspiring carved wooden doors and mosaic floors, as well as a series of historically interesting paintings depicting life in Mysore during the Edwardian Raj. Hindu temples within the palace grounds include the **Sri Shweta Varahaswamy Temple**; its *gopuram* (gateway tower) influenced the style of the later Sri Chamundeswari Temple on Chamundi Hill. There's also the Royal House of Mysore shop selling exclusive designs of saris and dupattas (scarves worn by Punjabi women).

The entry fee is paid at the southern gate of the grounds; keep your ticket to enter the palace building itself. Cameras must be deposited at the entrance gate – you can only take photos of the outside of the buildings. Some books on historical sites are sold near the exit of the main rooms, though the state

MYSORE



SLEEPING	Chamundi Vaasthi Gruha.....	25	D2
	Hotel Disaprakash.....	26	C1
	Hotel Maurya.....	27	C2
	Hotel Maurya Palace.....	28	D2
	Hotel Palace Plaza.....	29	D2
	Hotel Vyshak International.....	30	B2
	KSTDC Hotel Mayura Hoysala.....	31	A2
	Maurya Residency.....	(see 28)	
	Ritz Hotel.....	32	A2
	Royal Orchid Metropole.....	33	A2
	Vyshak Residency.....	34	B2
EATING	Bombay Tiffany's.....	(see 37)	
	Dynasty.....	(see 29)	
	Hotel RRR.....	35	C2
	Hotel RRR.....	36	D2
	Hotel RRR.....	36	D2
	Indra Cafe's Paras.....	37	C2
	Om Shanthi.....	38	E2
	Parklane Hotel.....	39	D2
	Tiger Trail.....	(see 33)	
SHOPPING	Cauchy Arts & Crafts Emporium.....	40	C1
	Datta Enterprises.....	(see 4)	
	Government Silk Factory.....	(see 2)	
	Showroom.....	(see 19)	
	Shruthi Musical Works.....	(see 19)	
	Veena Musical Works.....	42	C1
TRANSPORT	Central Bus Stand.....	43	D1
	City Bus Stand.....	44	C2
	Indian Airlines.....	(see 4)	
	Kiran Tours & Travel.....	(see 25)	
	Private Bus Stand.....	45	B1
	Railway Booking Office.....	46	A1

INFORMATION	1	C1	Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Mahav
	2	C2	Ashok Book Centre.....
	3	B1	Geetha Book House.....
	4	A2	Kamatika Tourism.....
	5	B1	KSTDC Transport Office.....
	6	D2	Main Post Office.....
	7	C2	Rekha Colour Lab.....
	8	C1	Sauharada Bookstore.....
	9	C2	State Bank of Mysore.....
	10	C2	State Bank of Mysore.....
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES	11	E1	Sri Patanjali Yogashala.....
	12	D1	Sri Shweta Varahaswamy
	13	B3	Temple.....
	14	C3	Statue of Maharaja Chamarajendar
	15	A1	Statue of Maharaja Krishnaraja
	16	C2	Statue of Maharaja Krishnaraja
	17	C3	Statue of Maharaja Krishnaraja
	18	C1	Statue of Maharaja Krishnaraja
	19	C1	Statue of Maharaja Krishnaraja
	20	D2	Statue of Maharaja Krishnaraja
	21	C3	Statue of Maharaja Krishnaraja
	22	D3	Statue of Maharaja Krishnaraja
	23	D2	Statue of Maharaja Krishnaraja
	24	C2	Statue of Maharaja Krishnaraja

1	15	A5	Ashtanga Yoga Research Institute (4km)
2	31	B3	Basappa Memorial Hospital (1km); Jayalaxmi Vilas Complex; Mysore Youth Museum (2km); Mysore Youth Museum (2km); Swasthya Ayurveda Centre (6km); Birmahalan Gardens (13km)
3	3	A3	
4	4	A1	
5	5	A5	
6	6	B3	
7	7	B3	
8	8	B3	
9	9	B3	
10	10	B3	
11	11	B3	
12	12	D3	
13	13	B3	
14	14	C3	Mysore Palace
15	15	A5	
16	16	B3	
17	17	C3	Mysore Zoo
18	18	C3	
19	19	C1	
20	20	D2	
21	21	C3	
22	22	D3	
23	23	D2	
24	24	C2	
25	25	A5	
26	26	C1	
27	27	C3	
28	28	D2	
29	29	D2	
30	30	B2	
31	31	A2	
32	32	A2	
33	33	A2	
34	34	B2	
35	35	C2	
36	36	D2	
37	37	C2	
38	38	E2	
39	39	D2	
40	40	C1	
41	41	C1	
42	42	C1	
43	43	D1	
44	44	C2	
45	45	B1	
46	46	A1	

DUSSEHRA

Mysore puts on quite a show for the 10-day Dussehra festival. The Maharaja's Palace and much of the city is illuminated every night (7pm to 9pm), and there are concerts, dance performances and other cultural events. The last day sees a dazzling procession (kicking off around 1pm) of richly costumed elephants, a garlanded idol, liveried retainers and cavalry marching through the streets to the rhythms of brass bands, travelling from the palace to the Bannimantap parade ground. In the evening, a torchlight parade at Bannimantap and fireworks closes the festival.

Mysore is packed during the festival, especially on the final day. The city has been promoting the Dussehra Gold Card (Rs 5000 for two people) as a way of avoiding the crowds. It's pricey, but it assures you good seats at both the final day's main events and includes entry to all Mysore's attractions and performances during the festival, as well as providing discounts on accommodation, dining and shopping. It's also possible to buy tickets (starting at Rs 200) just for access into the palace and Bannimantap for the parades. Contact the local KSTDC office or the **Dussehra Information Centre** (☎ 3203888; www.mysoredasara.com) for more details.

archaeology office, in the southwest part of the grounds, has a more complete collection.

Incorporating some of the palace's living quarters and personal effects belonging to the maharaja's family, the **Residential Museum** (admission Rs 20; ☎ 10.30am-6.30pm) is rather dull next to the lustre of the state rooms.

Ninety-six thousand light bulbs illuminate the building during Dussehra (above) and every Sunday from 7pm to 8pm.

DEVARAJA MARKET

Built during Tipu Sultan's time, the spellbinding **Devaraja Market** (Sayyaji Rao Rd; ☎ 6am-8.30pm) is one of India's most colourful and lively bazaars. Stalls selling all manner of fruits, vegetables, flower garlands and spices, and conical piles of *kumkum* (coloured powder used for bindi dots on heads of married women as well as other religious rituals) make ideal photographic subjects. Be prepared to bargain when shopping.

CHAMUNDI HILL

Overlooking Mysore from the 1062m-high summit of Chamundi Hill, the **Sri Chamundeswari Temple** (☎ 2590027; ☎ 7am-2pm & 3.30-9pm), dominated by a towering seven-storey, 40m-high *gopuram*, makes a fine half-day excursion. Pilgrims are supposed to climb the 1000-plus steps to the top; those not needing a karmic boost will find descending easier. A road goes to the top; bus 201 departs from the City bus stand in Mysore for the summit every 40 minutes (Rs 6, 30 minutes). A taxi will cost about Rs 200.

A path that starts near the stalls behind the statue will lead you down the hill, a 45-minute descent taking in 1000 steps and re-

energising views. One-third of the way down is a 5m-high **Nandi** (Shiva's bull vehicle) that was carved out of solid rock in 1659. It's one of the largest in India and is visited by hordes of pilgrims. The garlanded statue has a flaky black coating of coconut-husk charcoal mixed with ghee.

You may have rubbery legs by the time you reach the bottom of the hill and it's still about 2km back to Mysore's centre. Fortunately, there are usually autorickshaws nearby, which charge Rs 40 or so for the trip back to town.

JAYACHAMARAJENDRA ART GALLERY

The **Jaganmohan Palace**, just west of the Maharaja's Palace, houses the **Jayachamarajendra Art Gallery** (☎ 2423693; Jaganmohan Palace Rd; adult/child Rs 15/8; ☎ 8.30am-5pm), which has a collection of kitsch objects and memorabilia from the Wodeyars, including weird and wonderful musical machines, rare instruments, Japanese art, and paintings by Raja Ravi Varma. Built in 1861, the palace served as a royal auditorium.

INDIRA GANDHI RASHTRIYA MANAV SANGRAHALAYA

The Bopal-based **Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya** (National Museum of Mankind; ☎ 2448231; www.museumofmankindindia.org; Wellington House, Irwin Rd; admission free; ☎ 10am-5.30pm Tue-Sun) is dedicated to preserving and promoting traditional Indian arts and culture. The Mysore branch functions primarily as a cultural centre and exhibition space showcasing arts from rural India. Monthly demonstrations and lectures are open to the public, as are workshops, which are usually two-week courses in a traditional

art form. The museum has excellent rotating exhibitions and a good souvenir shop.

JAYALAKSHMI VILAS COMPLEX MUSEUM

Inside the Mysore University Campus, 3km west of the city centre, this **museum** (☎ 2419348; admission free; 🕒 10am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, closed alternate Sat) housed in a grand mansion specialises in folklore. Displays include a wooden puppet of the 10-headed demon Ravana, leather shadow puppets, rural costumes, a 300-year-old temple cart and a stuffed tiger bearing a portrait of a past maharaja framed with elephant tusks!

RAIL MUSEUM

To see how Indian royals travelled in days past, pop into this **museum** (☎ 9844060012; KRS Rd; adult/child Rs 10/5; 🕒 9.30am-6.30pm Tue-Sun) behind the train station, where you can inspect the Mysore maharani's saloon, a wood-panelled beauty dating from 1899. There are also five steam engines, each with its own story.

OTHER SIGHTS

Mysore is an architectural vaudeville of fine buildings and monuments. Dating from 1805, **Government House** (Irwin Rd), formerly the British Residency, is a Tuscan Doric building set in 20 hectares of **gardens** (admission free; 🕒 5am-9pm).

In front of the north gate of the Maharaja's Palace is the 1920 **statue of Maharaja Chamarajendra Wodeyar** (New Statue Circle), facing the 1927 **Silver Jubilee Clock Tower** (Ashoka Rd). Nearby is the imposing **Rangacharlu Memorial Hall**, built in 1884. The next circle west is the 1950s Krishnaraja Circle, better known as KR Circle, graced by a **statue of Maharaja Krishnaraja Wodeyar**.

Towering **St Philomena's Cathedral** (☎ 2563148; St Philomena St; 🕒 5am-6pm, English mass 7am), built between 1933 and 1941 in neo-Gothic style, is one of the largest in India and has beautiful stained-glass windows.

Mysore's **zoo** (☎ 2440752; Indiranagar; adult/child Rs 25/5, camera Rs 10; 🕒 8.30am-5.30pm Wed-Mon), set in pretty gardens on the eastern edge of the city, dates from 1892. A range of primates, tigers, elephants, bears, birds and rhinos live here.

Activities & Courses

BIRD-WATCHING

Karanji Lake Nature Park (Indiranagar; admission Rs 10, camera/video Rs 10/25; 🕒 8.30am-5.30pm), next to the zoo, is home to a large number of bird species, including great and little cormorants, purple and grey herons, various egrets, black

ibises, rose-ringed parakeets, green bee-eaters and painted storks, as well as several kinds of butterfly. The aviary here is sad but fascinating; its enormous great pied hornbill is a sight to see.

AYURVEDA

Emerge Spa (☎ 2522500; www.emergespa.co.in; Wind-flower Spa & Resort, Maharana Pratap Rd, Nazarbad), Mysore's slickest spa operation, offers an hour's Ayurvedic massage starting at Rs 690, as well as a range of Balinese massage, hydrotherapy and beauty treatments.

Classy **Indus Valley Ayurvedic Centre** (☎ 2473437; www.ayurindus.com; Lalithadripura) is set on 16 hectares of gardens, 7km east of Mysore at the foot of Chamundi Hill. Its academic approach to the science of Ayurveda is based strictly on the Vedas (Hindu sacred books), and it offers training programmes for those interested in learning the technique. A whole body massage and steam is Rs 860. Vikram-style yoga classes are held at 7am and 4pm (Rs 210). The best deals are the overnight-stay packages (single/double from Rs 5040/7980).

More of a clinic than a spa, **Kerala Ayurvedic Health Centre** (☎ 5269111; www.keralaayurvedic.com; 10/1 Jhansi Lakshmi Bhai Cross Rd) offers four-hour sessions for around US\$20. Training courses and yoga classes are also given.

The outpatient operation of Swaasthya Ayurveda Village (p902), **Swaasthya Ayurveda Centre** (☎ 5557557; www.swaasthya.com; Vijayanagar) offers similar keenly priced, expertly performed treatments. It's 5km west of Mysore's centre, just past the Green Hotel and behind Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.

YOGA

The following places have put Mysore on the international yoga map. Most courses require at least a month's commitment, and you'll need to book far in advance for Ashtanga Yoga Research Institute and the Atma Vikasa Centre; call or write to the centres for details.

Ashtanga Yoga Research Institute (AYRI; ☎ 2516756; www.ayri.org; 3rd Stage, 235 8th Cross, Gokulam) Ninety-two-year-old K Pattabhi Jois is famous in Ashtanga circles the world over. He taught Madonna her yoga moves.

Atma Vikasa Centre (☎ 2341978; www.atmavikasa.com; Bharathi Mahila Samaja, Kuvempunagar Double Rd) 'Backbending expert' Yogacharya Venkatesh offers courses in yoga, Sanskrit and meditation.

Sri Patanjala Yogashala (Yoga Research Institute; Sri Bramatantra Swatantra Parakala Mutt, Jagannohan Palace Circle; ☎ 6-8am & 5-7pm) The well-respected Ashtanga practitioner BNS Iyengar (not to be confused with BKS Iyengar, famed exponent of Iyengar yoga) teaches here.

MUSIC

The folks at **Shruthi Musical Works** (☎ 2529551; 1189 3rd Cross, Irwin Rd; ☎ 10.30am-9pm Mon-Sat, 10.30am-2pm Sun) get good reviews for their tabla instruction (Rs 200 per hour).

Tours

The KSTDC's comprehensive Mysore city tour (Rs 125) takes in city sights plus Chamundi Hill, Srirangapatnam and Brindavan Gardens. It starts daily at 8.30am, ends at 8.30pm and is likely to leave you breathless.

Other KSTDC tours include one to Belur, Halebid and Sravanabelagola (Rs 325) every Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday at 7.30am, ending at 9pm; and Ooty (Udhagamandalam) every Monday, Thursday and Saturday (Rs 350) leaving at 7am and returning at 9pm. Both these tours run daily in the high season.

All tours leave from the **KSTDC Hotel Mayura Hoysala** (2 Jhansi Lakshmi Bai Rd). Bookings can be made at the KSTDC Transport Office (p895) or at travel agencies around town.

Sleeping

Rooms fill up during Dussehra, so book ahead if you're arriving during the festival. Also check with the tourist office about the local homestay programme, which offers rooms from around Rs 400 per person.

BUDGET

The following have hot water (at least in the morning) and 24-hour checkout.

Mysore Youth Hostel (☎ 2544704; www.yhmysore.com; Gangothri Layout; dm from Rs 40; ☎) All the usual rules and regs, including a 10.30pm curfew, are in place at this well-run, friendly hostel set in quiet, green grounds about 4km from the city centre.

Hotel Dasaprakash (☎ 2442444; www.mysoredasaprakashgroup.com; Gandhi Sq; s/d from Rs 215/420; ☎) This long-time favourite has efficient service, and old wooden furniture in some rooms. Within the complex there's an inexpensive veg restaurant, an ice-cream parlour, a travel agency and an astro-palmist.

Chamundi Vasathi Gruha (☎ 5266162; Chandragupta Rd; s/d Rs 250/550; ☎) This family-run place has a smattering of colonial charm, pumpkin-coloured walls and internet access.

Hotel Maurya (☎ 2426677; Hanumantha Rao St; s/d from Rs 400/600) In the process of upgrading all its well-kept rooms, this justly popular place has obliging staff and a great location among Mysore's winding alleys.

Ritz Hotel (☎ 2422668; hotelritz@rediffmail.com; BM Rd; d/q Rs 450/700) The Ritz's glory days are long gone but its four old-fashioned rooms have charm. The shaded restaurant-bar is a good place for a quiet drink or snack.

MIDRANGE

KSTDC Hotel Mayura Hoysala (☎ 2425349; www.nic.in/ksd2; 2 Jhansi Lakshmi Bai Rd; s/d incl breakfast from Rs 500/650; ☎) This government hotel with clean, good sized rooms is convenient for the train station, but it's also on a busy street, so don't bargain on a quiet night's sleep.

Hotel Maurya Palace (☎ 2435912; www.sangroupofhotels.com; 2716 Sri Harsha Rd; r from Rs 575; ☎) Along with its sister property next door, Maurya Residency (☎ 2523375; room with AC from Rs 745), this is the best of the Sri Harsha Rd hotel gang. The staff are helpful, the tidy rooms well presented and its nonveg restaurant Jewel Rock is beloved by carnivores.

Hotel Palace Plaza (☎ 2430034; www.hotelpalaceplaza.com; Sri Harsha Rd; s/d from Rs 600/750; ☎ ☎) Not the most palatial of places, but the rooms here are modern, tastefully decorated and comfortable.

Hotel Vyshak International (☎ 2421777; vyshakininternational@yahoo.com; 19 Seebaiah Rd; d from Rs 800; ☎) Clean, efficiently run and welcoming – what more could you want? The management also runs the Vyshak Residency (double from Rs 800) across the road.

Ginger (☎ 6633333; www.gingerhotels.com; Nazarbad Mohalla; s/d Rs 999/1199; ☎ ☎) This ultramodern business hotel is painted in warm orange tones. The sleek rooms are good value and come with lots of features, including wi-fi and LCD TVs.

our pick Green Hotel (☎ 2512536; www.greenhotelindia.com; 2270 Vinoba Rd, Jayalakshmiapuram; s/d garden from Rs 1250/1650, palace from Rs 2250/2500) Partly housed in a century-old palace once used as a country retreat for Wodeyar princesses, the award-winning Green Hotel, 5km west of town, is a gem. Not only is it run on ecological principles, it also donates all profits to charity.

The palace's elegant atmosphere, complete with beautiful gardens, is impressively intact, and the guest rooms are imaginatively themed. The modern garden wing has fresh (but themeless) rooms.

TOP END

Lalitha Mahal Palace Hotel (☎ 2470470; www.lalithamahalpalace.com; s/d/ste from US\$60/70/230; 🍷 📺 🚿) Only consider staying at this former palace, 5km east of the city centre, if you're prepared to splash out on the suites, which offer a taste of Raj-era life, with canopied beds, period furniture and lots of froufrou. The elevator is similarly precious, with carpeting and a tapestry-upholstered ottoman. As a government-run operation, the hotel's service can be lax.

Windflower Spa & Resort (☎ 2522500; www.thewindflower.com; Maharanapratap Rd, Nazarbad; s/d incl breakfast from Rs 3200/3600; 🍷 📺 🚿) Bali comes to Mysore at this stylish, relaxing resort next to the racecourse. Rooms are huge and come with outdoor showers and private plunge pools. Rates include taxes.

Royal Orchid Metropole (☎ 5255566; www.baljeehotels.com; 5 Jhansi Lakshmi Bai Rd; s/d from Rs 4000/4600; 🍷 📺 🚿) This recently renovated hotel was originally built by the Wodeyars and has bona fide old-world charm. The heritage rooms are particularly nice.

Eating

Mysore is well served by Indian restaurants, but for Western food you're best sticking with the major hotels. Unless otherwise mentioned, restaurants are open from noon to 3pm and 7pm to 11pm.

Bombay Tiffanys (Sayyaji Rao Rd; sweets Rs 2-40; 🕒 7.30am-10pm) For traditional Indian sweets, Bombay Tiffanys has a solid reputation. Try the local delicacy *Mysore pak* (a sweet made from chickpea flour, sugar and ghee).

Vinayaka Mylari (769 Nazarbad Main Rd; snacks Rs 6-22; 🕒 7.30-11.30am & 4-8pm) Locals line up for the dosas (paper-thin, lentil-flour pancakes) and soft Mysore-style *idlis* (rice dumplings) served with delicious coconut chutney at this decades-old operation. A *masala dosa* and coffee make a great breakfast or lunch.

Indra Café's Paras (1740 Sayyaji Rao Rd; mains Rs 30-60; 🕒 7.30am-10pm) Take your pick from South (Rs 30) or North (Rs 60) Indian-style thalis at this popular joint opposite the market, with *chaat* (snack) central (Rs 8 to 20) downstairs.

Parklane Hotel (☎ 2430400; www.parklanemysore.com; 2720 Sri Harsha Rd; mains Rs 35-100) At the time of research the hotel was being upgraded, with plans to add a rooftop pool, but the popular restaurant-bar was still in full swing; by now the famous hanging gardens courtyard should be fully restored, with a new upper terrace for families. Enjoy Chinese, continental and Indian dinners by candlelight at night, and occasional live music.

Hotel RRR (Gandhi Sq; mains Rs 40-70) The speciality at this reliable and usually packed place is spicy Andhra-style veg thalis (Rs 36) served on banana leaves. Some meaty options are available, too. There's a second branch on Sri Harsha Rd.

Om Shanthi (Hotel Siddharta, Guest House Rd; mains Rs 40-80) Om Shanthi is a byword for excellent veg food in Mysore. Its special South Indian thali (Rs 75) is really quite special. Pay first at the counter before sitting down.

Dynasty (Hotel Palace Plaza, Sri Harsha Rd; mains Rs 40-85) There's a touch of class to this ground-floor restaurant, with its check tablecloths, intimate booths and low lighting. The same menu of reliable Indian and continental standards is also served on the rooftop, with views of the palace and Chamundi Hill.

La Gardenia (☎ 2426426; Regaalis Mysore, 3-14 Vinoba Rd; mains Rs 120-150) This place serves tasty and well-presented food in a sophisticated environment, with a good assortment of dishes if you're tired of the Indian options.

our pick Tiger Trail (☎ 5255566; Royal Orchid Metropole; 5 Jhansi Lakshmi Bai Rd; mains Rs 80-200) This delightful restaurant specialising in tandoori dishes serves delicious food in a courtyard that twinkles with torches and fairy lights at night. There's often live classical Indian music performances, and it's a nice spot for high tea, too.

Lalitha Mahal Palace Hotel (☎ 2470470; mains Rs 200-350) Feel like you're dining at Versailles in the Wedgewood-coloured restaurant at the hotel of the same name (left).

Shopping

Mysore is famous for its carved sandalwood, inlay work, silk saris and wooden toys. It is also one of India's major incense-manufacturing centres, peppered with scores of little family-owned *agarbathi* (incense) factories.

Souvenir and handicraft shops are dotted around Jaganmohan Palace and Dhanvanthri Rd, while silk shops line Devaraj Urs Rd.

Cauvery Arts & Crafts Emporium (Sayyaji Rao Rd; ☎ 10am-7.30pm) Not the cheapest place, but the selection is extensive and there's no pressure to buy.

Government Silk Factory (☎ 2481803; Mananthody Rd, Ashokapuram; ☎ 10am-noon & 2-4pm Mon-Sat) You can see weavers at work here, and buy silks at an on-site shop; there's also a factory showroom on KR Circle, open from 10.30am to 7.30pm.

Sandalwood Oil Factory (☎ 2483345; Ashokapuram; ☎ 9am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Sat) Buy authentic incense sticks and oil (from Rs 650 for 5ml) at this factory, located about 2km southeast of the Maharaja's Palace, off Mananthody Rd.

Datta Enterprises (355 KR Hospital Rd; ☎ 10am-9pm) Get custom-made Ganesh stickers here, starting at Rs 25 each.

Fabindia (☎ 4259009; 451JLB Rd, Chamrajpuram; ☎ 10am-8pm) There's a branch of the ever reliable clothing and homewares shop on the way to the silk and sandalwood factories.

Shruthi Musical Works (☎ 2529551; 1189 3rd Cross, Irwin Rd; ☎ 10.30am-9pm Mon-Sat, 10.30am-2pm Sun) and **Veena Musical Works** (Kalamma Temple Bldg, Irwin Rd; ☎ 10am-8.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1.30pm Sun) both sell a variety of traditional musical instruments; you can view the workshop of the latter across the road from the shop.

Getting There & Away

AIR

There are no flights to Mysore (although an airport is in the offing). **Indian Airlines** (☎ 2421846; Jhansi Lakshmi Bai Rd; ☎ 10am-1.30pm & 2.15-5pm) has an office next to KSTDC Hotel Mayura Hoysala.

BUS

The **Central bus stand** (☎ 2520853; Bangalore-Mysore Rd) handles all KSRTC long-distance buses. The **City bus stand** (☎ 2425819; Sayaji Rao Rd) is for city, Srirangapatnam and Chamundi Hill buses.

KSRTC bus services from Mysore include those listed on below.

For Belur, Halebid or Sravanabelagola, the usual gateway is Hassan. There's one bus to Sravanabelagola; otherwise you can transfer at Channarayapatna. For Hampi, the best transfer point is Hospet.

The **Private bus stand** (Sayyaji Rao Rd) has services to Hubli, Bijapur, Mangalore, Ooty and Ernakulum. Book tickets with **Kiran Tours & Travel** (☎ 5559404; 21/2 Chandragupta Rd).

TRAIN

At the **railway booking office** (☎ 131; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Sat, 8am-2pm Sun), located within the train station, you can reserve a seat on one of six daily expresses to Bengaluru (2nd/chair Rs 70/228, three hours), or on the high-speed *Shatabdi* (chair/executive Rs 275/550, two hours), departing at 2.20pm daily except Tuesday. The *Shatabdi* continues to Chennai (chair/executive Rs 690/1315, seven hours). Several passenger trains also go daily to Bengaluru (Rs 28, 3½ hours), stopping at Srirangapatnam (Rs 9, 20 minutes).

Two passenger and three express trains go daily to Arsikere and Hassan. One express sets off to Mumbai on Thursday at 6.50am (sleeper/3AC/2AC Rs 369/1009/1583).

BUSES FROM MYSORE

Destination	Fare (Rs)	Duration (hr)	Frequency
Bandipur	35 (O)	2	hourly
Bengaluru	70 (O)/102 (R)/150 (V)	3	every 15min
Channarayapatna	50 (O)	2	hourly
Chennai	384 (V)	6	2 daily
Ernakulum	440 (R)	10	5 daily
Gokarna	240 (O)	12	1 daily
Hassan	60 (O)	3	every 45min
Hospet	200 (O)	8	4 daily
Mangalore	130 (O)/220 (R)	7	hourly
Nagarhole	55 (O)	3	4 daily
Ooty	75 (O)/120 (D)	5	hourly
Sravanabelagola	50 (O)	2½	1 daily

O – Ordinary, D – semideluxe, R – Rajahamsa, V – Volvo

Getting Around

Agencies at hotels and around town rent cars from Rs 5 per kilometre for an Ambassador, with a minimum of 250km per day, plus Rs 125 for the driver.

Flag fall on autorickshaws is Rs 12, and Rs 5 per kilometre is charged thereafter. Taxis are meterless, so fares must be negotiated.

AROUND MYSORE

Srirangapatnam

(☎ 08236

From this fort, built on a long island in the Cauvery River only 16km from Mysore, Hyder Ali and his son Tipu Sultan ruled much of southern India during the 18th century. In ruins since the British came through like a whirlwind in 1799, the ramparts, battlements and some of the gates of the fort still stand.

Close to the bus station is a handsome twin tower mosque built by Tipu Sultan, and within the fort walls you can also find the dungeon where Tipu held British officers captive, and the handsome **Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple** (☎ 7.30am-1pm & 4-8pm).

Srirangapatnam's star attraction is Tipu's summer palace, the **Daria Daulat Bagh** (☎ 252023; Indian/foreigner Rs 5/US\$2; ☎ 9am-5pm), which lies 1km east of the fort. Set in ornamental gardens, the palace is notable for its beautiful interior decoration. Not one inch has been left unadorned, with fascinating floor-to-ceiling murals depicting courtly life and Tipu's campaigns against the British. The man himself can be glimpsed in a portrait by John Zoffony, which was painted in 1780 when Tipu was 30.

About 2km further east the remains of Hyder Ali, his wife and Tipu are housed in the impressive onion-domed **Gumbaz** (☎ 252007; ☎ 8am-8pm). Again it's the tiger-striped interior of this mausoleum that dazzles most.

Head 500m east of Gumbaz for the river banks. A short coracle ride runs for Rs 25 per person. Resist dangling your hand in the water; a crocodile could have it for lunch.

Three kilometres upstream from Srirangapatnam, the **Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary** (☎ 0821-2481159; Indian/foreigner Rs 10/60, camera/video Rs 20/100; ☎ 8.30am-6pm) is on one of three islands in the Cauvery River. The storks, ibises, egrets, spoonbills and cormorants here are best seen in the early morning or late afternoon on a short **boat ride** (per person Rs 25). There's also a maze made from herbal plants and a restaurant on site.

SLEEPING & EATING

Royal Retreat New Amblee Holiday Resort (☎ 0821-3292475; www.ambleeresort.com; r from Rs 1200; ☎ ☎)

A menagerie of rabbits and ducks, and the owner's Rolls-Royce greets you at the Amblee, which offers relatively good accommodation, a pleasant riverside setting and a reasonably priced restaurant.

Swaasthya Ayurveda Village (☎ 217476; www.swaasthya.com; 69 Bommuru Agrahara; r incl full board Rs 960)

Set amid lush riverside greenery, this is an idyllic place to stay whether or not you choose to avail yourself of the various reasonably priced Ayurvedic treatments on offer. Rooms are clean and simple, and rates include delicious vegetarian meals, yoga and spoken Sanskrit classes. It's located off Bengaluru-Mysore Rd.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Take the frequent buses 313 or 316 (Rs 10, one hour) from Mysore's City bus stand. Passenger trains travelling from Mysore to Bengaluru (Rs 9, 20 minutes) also stop here. The stand for private buses heading to Brindavan Gardens (Rs 12, 30 minutes) is just across from Srirangapatnam's main bus stand.

GETTING AROUND

The sights are a little spread out, but walking isn't out of the question. For a quicker look round, tongas (two-wheeled horse carriages) cost about Rs 100 for three hours, and an autorickshaw is about Rs 150 (also for three hours).

Brindavan Gardens

If you think these ornamental **gardens** (☎ 08236-290019; adult/child Rs 10/5, camera Rs 25; ☎ 10am-10pm) laid out below the River Cauvery dam look like the set from a Bollywood movie, then you're on the money – they've been the backdrop to many a shimmering musical number. Locals flock here, particularly on weekends and holidays, and at 7pm, when the illuminated fountains are switched on (to the accompaniment of film tunes).

Within the gardens are two hotels: the no-frills **Hotel Mayura Cauvery** (☎ 08236-257252; s/d Rs 200/350) and the swanky **Royal Orchid Brindavan Garden** (☎ 080-25584242; www.baljeehotels.com), still under construction at the time of research. Its bar promises to be the best spot from which to view the gardens.

The gardens are 19km northwest of Mysore. One of the KSTDC tours stops here,

and buses 301, 304, 305, 306 and 365 depart from Mysore's City bus stand hourly (Rs 7, 45 minutes).

Melkote

Life in the devout Hindu town of Melkote, about 50km north of Mysore, revolves around the 12th-century **Cheluvanarayana Temple** (☎ 08236-298739; Raja St; 🕒 8am-1pm & 5-8pm), with its rose-coloured *gopuram* and ornately carved pillars. Get a work-out on the hike up to the hilltop **Yoganarasimha Temple** (admission free), which offers fine views of the surrounding hills and valleys. The town comes alive for the **Vairamudi Festival** in March or April (p882).

Three KSRTC buses a day shuttle between Mysore and Melkote (Rs 40, 1½ hours).

Somnathpur

The astonishingly beautiful **Keshava Temple** (☎ 08227-270059; Indian/foreigner Rs 5/US\$2; 🕒 9am-5:30pm) stands at the edge of the tranquil village of Somnathpur, approximately 33km east of Mysore. Built in 1268, this star-shaped temple is a masterpiece of Hoysala architecture (see p910), covered with superb stone sculptures depicting various scenes from the Ramayana, Mahabharata and Bhagavad Gita, and the life and times of the Hoysala kings. Unlike the larger Hoysala temples at Belur and Halebid, it's also remarkably complete.

On a tree in the temple grounds there's a red postbox where you can drop your stamped mail to get it postmarked with a temple image.

Somnathpur is 7km south of Bannur and 10km north of Tirumakudal Narsipur. Take one of the half-hourly buses from Mysore to either village (Rs 12, 30 minutes) and change there.

Sivasamudram

About 60km southeast of Mysore, near the twin waterfalls of Barachukki and Gagana-chukki, is the relaxing **Georgia Sunshine Village** (☎ 9845754661; www.georgiasunshine.com; Malavalli; d incl full board from Rs 1372; 🍷 🍷). Accommodation is in bungalows (the open-air bathrooms have small gardens) and the home-made food is delicious. The dog-loving hosts can arrange treks to the waterfalls (best viewed in June and July), which are around 5km away.

Frequent buses run from Mysore (Rs 22, one hour) and Bengaluru (Rs 50, three hours) to Malavalli, 14km away. Call ahead and they'll arrange an autorickshaw to bring you the rest of the way for Rs 100.

BANDIPUR NATIONAL PARK

About 80km south of Mysore on the Ooty road, the **Bandipur National Park** (Indian/foreigner Rs 50/150) covers 880 sq km and is part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, which includes the sanctuaries of Nagarhole, Mudumalai in Tamil Nadu and Wayanad in Kerala. It was once the Mysore maharajas' private wildlife reserve and is home to over 5000 Asiatic elephants – a fifth of the world's population.

Bandipur is also noted for herds of gaurs (Indian bison), chitals (spotted deer), sambars, panthers, sloth bears and langurs. More than 80 tigers reportedly roam here, but they're rarely seen. The vegetation is a hodgepodge of deciduous and evergreen forest and scrubland. The best time to see wildlife is March to April, but November to February has the most temperate climate.

Brief **elephant rides** (per person Rs 50) are available for a minimum of four people. Private cars – with the exception of resort vehicles – are not allowed to tour the park so you're stuck with the Forest Department's diesel-minibus **safari** (per person Rs 25; 🕒 6am, 7am, 8am, 4pm & 5pm), which lasts one hour. The wildlife seen will be limited, as a bus lumbering through the forest doesn't exactly entice creatures out into the open. On Sundays tourists can outnumber the chitals.

Sleeping & Eating

Forest Department Bungalows (r Rs 500) It's all pretty basic, and at night the grounds are shared with sleeping chitals. Meals are available with advance notice. Reservations should be made at least two weeks in advance with Project Tiger (☎ 0821-2480901; fdptrm@sancharnet.in; Aranya Bhavan, Ashokapuram) in Mysore.

Bandipur Safari Lodge (Mysore-Ooty Rd; s/d incl full board US\$65/100) The 12 animal-themed rooms at this government-run operation, 3km outside the park, are comfy. Rates include a jeep safari, an elephant ride and all park fees. Book with Jungle Lodges & Resorts Ltd (Map p885; ☎ 080-25597021; www.junglulodges.com; 2nd floor, Shrungar Shopping Complex, MG Rd, Bengaluru; open 10am to 5.30pm).

Tusker Trails (☎ 080-23618024; www.nivalink.com/tuskertrails/index.html; s/d incl full board US\$90/150; 🍷) Rates at this small, simple resort on the eastern edge of the park near Mangala village include two daily safaris.

Getting There & Away

Buses between Mysore (2½ hours) and Ooty (three hours) will drop you at Bandipur National Park or Bandipur Safari Lodge.

NAGARHOLE NATIONAL PARK

West of the Kabini River is the 643-sq-km wildlife sanctuary of **Nagarhole National Park** (Rajiv Gandhi National Park; Indian/foreigner Rs 50/150, camera Rs 50), pronounced *nag-ar-hole-eh*. The lush forests here are home to around 60 tigers, as well as leopards, elephants, gaurs, muntjacs (barking deer), wild dogs, bonnet macaques and common langurs; animal sightings are more common here than in Bandipur.

The park's main entrance is 93km southwest of Mysore. However, the best accommodation and the most beautiful views are at the Kabini Lake side of the reserve, near the village of Karapura, around 80km south of Mysore. **Orange County** (www.orangecounty.in) are building a resort on the far bank of the lake here. If heading to the park by taxi, make sure that your driver knows exactly which side of the park you're staying, as it's quite a distance between the two locations.

If you're not staying at a lodge, the only way to see the park is on the **bus tour** (per person Rs 25; ☎ 6-8am & 4-5pm); the best time to view wildlife is the hot months (April to May), but the winter air (November to February) is kinder. Bookings can be made in advance with the Forest Department in Mysore, or you can just turn up.

Sleeping & Eating

As there's less accommodation at the park's main entrance (and subsequently less noise to scare away the wildlife), this is the place to be if you want to up your chances of spotting a tiger. However, the places to stay here are not nearly as nice as those on Kabini Lake. Unless otherwise mentioned, rates quoted cover accommodation, three meals, and early morning and late afternoon safari tours into the park, either by jeep or boat.

PARK GATE

Forest Department rooms (☎ 0821-2480901; fdptm@sancharnet.in; r Indian/foreigner Rs 750/1500) These rooms are within the park, close to the main gate. They're overpriced for what you get and you'd be advised to bring mosquito coils. Meals and tours are extra. Book at least two weeks in advance with Project Tiger (☎ 0821-

2480901; fdptm@sancharnet.in; Aranya Bhavan, Ashokapuram) in Mysore.

Jungle Inn (☎ 08222-246022; www.jungleinnnagarhole.com; Km 19 Hunsur-Nagarhole Rd; s/d 1st night US\$110/170, additional nights US\$60/100) This place is by no means luxurious, but there's a welcoming atmosphere, evening campfires and simple, clean rooms. Many of the organic vegetables and fruit used in the meals are grown on site. The resort is 35km from park reception on the Hunsur road.

Kings Sanctuary (☎ 08222-246444; www.vivekhotels.com; Km 19 Hunsur-Nagarhole Rd; s/d Indian Rs 7000/8500, foreigner US\$190/280; ☎ ☎) This large resort is only a few years old but it's already looking worn. It's the only upmarket option at this end of the park. The rates for Indians include only one safari, while foreigners get two.

KABINI LAKE

Kabini Lake View (☎ 9880175605; kabinilakeview@yahoo.co.in; Sogahalli, Antrasanthe; Indian/foreigner Rs 2000/US\$85) This place offers eight rooms in simple concrete cabins using solar power for lights and water heating. There's little shade on the site, 63km south of Mysore, but it has splendid view of the backwaters and the package includes boat trips to an island for bird-watching.

Kabini River Lodge (☎ 08228-264402; Indian tents/r cottages Rs 2750/3000/3500, foreigner s/d US\$120/240) On the grounds of the former maharaja's hunting lodge beside Kabini Lake is this efficient, government-run resort. For accommodation there's a choice of large canvas tents sheltering beneath corrugated roofs, regular rooms and cottages. Book through Jungle Lodges & Resorts Ltd (Map p885; ☎ 080-25597021; www.junglelodges.com; 2nd floor, Shrungar Shopping Complex, MG Rd, Bengaluru; open 10am to 5.30pm).

Cicada Kabini (☎ 080-41152200, 9945602305; www.cicadaresorts.com; s/d Rs 5000/7000; ☎ ☎ ☎) This well-thought-out luxury ecoresort brings a dash of contemporary chic to the lakeside. The rates are for accommodation and meals only; safaris (R750) and the use of kayaks and pedal boats (R250) are extra.

Water Woods (☎ 08228-264421; www.waterwoods.net; s/d US\$225/325; ☎ ☎) Next to Kabini River Lodge, Water Woods offers just five rooms set in a large and pleasantly furnished lakeside house with tranquil gardens, a multigym and a six-hole golf course. A canoe is available for guests' use.

Getting There & Away

Direct buses depart from Mysore twice daily and can drop you at Jungle Inn. For transport to the lodges around Kabiri Lake, enquire when making a booking.

KODAGU (COORG) REGION

The mountainous Kodagu (or Coorg) region is home to the Kodava people and refugee Tibetans. The geography and cool climate make it a fantastic area for trekking, bird-watching and generally refreshing the soul. Winding roads ramble over forested hills and past spice and coffee plantations, which burst into fragrant white blossoms in March and April.

The best season for trekking is October to March. You should hire a guide who will arrange food, transport and accommodation; see right for recommendations. Most treks last two to three days, but longer treks are possible; the most popular treks are to the peaks of Tadiyendamol (1745m) and Pushpagiri (1712m), and to smaller Kotebetta.

Kodagu was a state in its own right until 1956, when it merged with Karnataka. Local politicians, tired of seeing little financial assistance from Bengaluru for infrastructure and social services, are pushing for statehood to be restored, or at least for more local autonomy.

The region's capital and transport hub is Madikeri, but for the authentic Kodagu experience it's best to base yourself on one of the many estates that take in guests. Owners can arrange plantation tours and guides for hiking routes. Avoid weekends, when places get booked up by Bengaluru's IT and call-centre crowd.

Madikeri (Mercara)

☎ 08272 / pop 32,286 / elev 1525m

Also known as Mercara, this bustling market town is spread out along a series of ridges. The main reason for coming here is to organise treks and sort out the practicalities of travel.

ORIENTATION & INFORMATION

In the chaotic centre around the KSRTC and private-bus stands, you'll find most of the hotels and restaurants as well as several ATMs.

If you need to change money, cash travellers cheques or get a credit-card advance, try **Canara Bank** (☎ 229302; Main Rd, Gandhi Chowk; ☎ 10.30am-2.30pm Mon-Fri). Internet cafés are plentiful.

SIGHTS

Madikeri's **fort**, now the municipal headquarters, was built in 1812 by Raja Lingarajendra II. Cows graze around the old church here, home to a quirky **museum** (admission free; ☎ 10am-5.30pm Tue-Sun) displaying dusty, poorly labelled statues and the like.

East of the fort is the Indo-Saracenic-style **Omkareshwara Temple** (☎ 6.30am-noon & 5-8pm), built by the raja in 1820, which is surrounded by a small lake. Reach it via the steps descending past the police station.

The panoramic view from **Raja's Seat** (admission free; MG Rd; ☎ 5.30am-7.30pm) is breathtaking. Behind are gardens, a toy train line for kids and a tiny Kodava-style **temple**.

On the way to **Abbi Falls**, a pleasant 7km hike from the town centre, visit the quietly beautiful **Raja's Tombs**, better known as Gaddige. An autorickshaw costs about Rs 150 return.

ACTIVITIES

A trekking guide is essential for navigating the labyrinth of forest tracks. Most of the estates in Kodagu also offer trekking programmes.

Raja Shekar at **Friends Tours & Travels** (☎ 225672; v_trak@rediffmail.com; College Rd; ☎ 10am-2pm & 4.30-8pm Mon-Sat, 6-7.30pm Sun) works in conjunction with Rao Ganesh at **Sri Ganesh Automobile** (☎ 229102; Hill Rd), just up from the private bus stand. It arranges one- to 10-day treks for Rs 500 per person per day (Rs 700 if you're solo), including guide, accommodation and food. Short walks take only a day or two to prepare. For long treks, trips on obscure routes or big groups, it's best to give a week's notice.

Coorg Trails (☎ 594061; coorgtrails@yahoo.co.in; Main Rd; ☎ 9am-8.30pm) can also arrange day treks for Rs 300 per person and a 22km trek to Kotebetta, including an overnight stay in a village, for Rs 600 per person. The office is near the town hall.

Anoop Chinnappa at the **Dawn** (☎ 223388; outdoorindia@sancharnet.in; Powerhouse Rd) offers guided day walks up on the ridges for Rs 500 per person, and can also arrange longer camping trips to a wildlife sanctuary that has an elephant migratory path running through it.

One-hour sessions at the tiny **Shri Akhila Ravi Ayurshala Ayurvedic clinic** (☎ 594288; Powerhouse Rd; ☎ 9am-6pm), a short walk from the fort, cost Rs 175; a normal course runs seven days.

SLEEPING

Many hotels reduce their rates in the off season (January to March and June to September); all of those listed below have hot water, at least in the morning, and 24-hour checkout.

Dawn (☎ 223388; outdoorindia@sancharnet.in; Pow-erhouse Rd; dm Rs 125) This is the home of enthusiastic ecowarrior Anoop Chinnappa, who can also organise treks. It's 1km from the bus stand, and although the rooms are basic, they have personality.

Hotel Cauvery (☎ 225492; School Rd; s/d/tr Rs 200/450/550) This ageing hotel, tucked behind Hotel Capitol opposite the private bus stand, is scheduled for a make-over. It has some character, and the amiable owner Ganesh Aiyanna can arrange treks up to Tadiyendamol and elsewhere.

Hilltown Hotel (☎ 223801; www.madikeri.com/hilltown; Hill Town Rd; s/d from Rs 250/600) Down the lane running past Hotel Chitra, the Hilltown is a generally spruce place with fish tanks on the stairs and a pretty garden opposite. Singles are small and some rooms have damp walls. It also has a restaurant (mains Rs 30 to 60).

Hotel Mayura Valley View (☎ 228387; r from Rs 999) The overpriced rooms here fail to match up to the stunning valley view from the windows. Staff are pretty laid back, and the restaurant-bar (meals Rs 30 to 85; open 6.30am to 10.30pm) with a terrace is certainly the

best place in town for a drink. It's near Raja's Seat.

Hotel Coorg International (☎ 228071; www.coorginternational.com; Convent Rd; s/d incl half-board from Rs 2400/2900; ♿ ♿) Madikeri's classiest option isn't such a bad deal considering rates include breakfast and dinner, snacks through the day, and facilities such as cable TV, a small pool, a gym and an Ayurvedic massage room.

EATING

East End Hotel (GT Circle; mains Rs 35-80; ☎ 7am-10.30pm) Some veg dishes are available among the mut-ton offerings, but the special *masala dosas* (Rs 15) are the real reason to come; they're only available from 7.30am to 10.30am and 4pm to 10.30pm.

Udupi Hotel Vegland (Chickpet, Main Rd; meals Rs 15-20; ☎ 7am-9pm) This standard pure-veg joint near the fort is a friendly local place with cheap, reliable thalis.

Popular Guru Prasad (Main Rd; meals Rs 20; ☎ 6.30am-10pm) The aptly named Popular Guru Prasad serves perfectly steamed *idlis* (Rs 3.50 each) and other veggie options.

Hotel Capitol (School Rd; meals Rs 15-40; ☎ 6am-9.30pm) Head to the nonveg-room-cum-drinking-den at the rear for bacon-and-eggs breakfasts and the local speciality, *pandhi* (pork curry; Rs 35), made from porkers raised on the owner's estate.

THE KODAVAS

The native people of Kodagu are known as Kodavas. Numbering no more than 100,000, they are believed to be descendants of migrating Persians and Kurds or Greeks left behind from Alexander the Great's armies, although no-one's exactly sure. The word 'Kodava' apparently comes from the local words for 'Blessed by Mother Cauvery'.

Kodavas are divided into about 1000 clans. Each clan has its own *aine mane* (clan house), at which the entire clan gathers once a year to pay respects to their ancestors. Although nominally Hindu, Kodavas refuse to recognise any head of religion and are mainly nonvegetarian (their signature dish is pork curry served with rice dumplings). They also worship unique deities, including the Cauvery River. Wedding ceremonies (which rarely involve dowries) include complex dances, mock fighting with sticks, and such symbolic exploits as chopping off a banana leaf with a sword.

The best time to see Kodavas celebrating their unique culture is during their various festivals. Apart from the lively November/December **Huthri** festival (p882), there's Keilpodhu, the end of rice-planting season (held in the first week of September), when men show off their marksmanship by shooting coconuts strung up in tall trees. The **Tula Sankramana** festival, when the goddess Cauvery appears in the form of a gush of water at the river's source, is celebrated in mid-October with a dip in the Cauvery at the Talacauvery Temple.

At these festivals and other special occasions, Kodavas will don their distinctive traditional costumes; the men wear sashes, daggers, black gowns, colourful turbans and plenty of jewellery, while the women are wrapped in bright scarves and saris that are draped with even more complexity than normal.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Five deluxe buses a day depart from the KSRTC **busstand** (☎ 229134) for Bengaluru (Rs 135, seven hours), stopping in Mysore (Rs 70, 3½ hours) on the way. Deluxe buses also go to Mangalore (Rs 110, four hours, three daily), and frequent ordinary buses head to Hassan (Rs 60, three hours) and Shimoga (Rs 140, eight hours).

Around Madikeri

Many estates in Kodagu offer homestay-style accommodation, ranging in quality from basic to quite luxurious. The following are our pick of places within easy reach of Madikeri; for more options, see p908. Unless otherwise mentioned, rates include meals and trekking guides. Advance bookings should be made.

About 8km southeast of Madikeri is **Capitol Village Resort** (☎ 08272-225492; fax 229455; Chettali-Siddapur Rd; r from Rs 1250), a pleasant lodge nestled among coffee, cardamom and pepper plantations. Superclean rooms have balconies with great views. Meals (breakfast Rs 100, buffet lunch or dinner Rs 150) are extra, as are trekking guides.

our pick Rainforest Retreat (☎ /fax 08272-265636; www.rainforestours.com; s/d from Rs 1500/2500; ☞ Oct-end of May) is hard to beat for nature immersion. These ecochic cottages are located on an organic plantation surrounded by forest, and the friendly owners Sujata (a botanist) and Anurag (a molecular biologist) are a fount of knowledge about the region. The trekking is excellent, or you can just lie in a hammock and watch the birds. All proceeds go to the couple's NGO, which promotes environmental awareness and sustainable agriculture. It's 10km west of Madikeri near Gallibedu; call to arrange transport.

Alath-Cad Estate Bungalow (☎ 08274-252190, 9449617665; www.alathcadcoorg.com; Ammathi; r incl breakfast from Rs 1650) is set on a 26-hectare coffee plantation about 28km southeast of Madikeri, 1.5km from the town of Ammathi. Its rooms have solar-heated water and the owners are very friendly. Lunch and dinner are Rs 150 each.

A German-owned organic tea plantation, **Golden Mist** (☎ 08272-265629; www.goldenmist.4t.com; s/d Rs 2000/3000) has rooms for up to four people. It's a lovely place, similar in atmosphere to Rainforest Retreat.

On the way to Gallibedu, **Club Mahindra** (☎ 08272-221790; www.clubmahindra.com; Galibedu Rd;

d from Rs 2500; ☞ ☞) is an upmarket time-share resort. It's a good place if you're travelling with kids, since it offers plenty of activities, two pools and self-catering suites. Rates are room only.

Luxury tents (far nicer than many hotel rooms!) are the latest addition to **Orange County Resort** (☎ 08274-258481; www.orangecounty.in; Siddapur; d cottages/tents Rs 8500/10,500; ☞ ☞), a fine resort on a 120-hectare plantation, 32km south of Madikeri. Some of the villas have private swimming pools. Rates include taxes; guided treks, boating and Ayurvedic massages are available for extra cost. Make bookings through **Trails India** (☎ 080-25325302; www.trailsindia.com; 2nd floor, St Patrick's Business Complex, Museum Rd) in Bengaluru.

Dubare Forest Reserve

Head to Kushalnagar, Kodagu's second-largest town, and you'll pass the Dubare Forest Reserve. Here, on the banks of the Cauvery River, a camp has been established for 12 elephants retired from working in the jungles. Cross the river (Rs 20) and you can watch the elephants being washed and fed daily at 9.30am. To take part in the full programme (Indian/foreigner Rs 100/250), including an elephant ride, you need to be there by 8.30am.

Bookings can be made through **Jungle Lodges & Resorts Ltd** (Map p885; ☎ 080-25597021; www.junglelodges.com; 2nd fl, Shrunagar Shopping Complex, MG Rd, Bengaluru; ☞ 10am-5.30pm), which also runs the reserve's rustic but good **Dubare Elephant Camp** (☎ 9449599755; Indian/foreigner incl full board Rs 1900/US\$75). Rates include the elephant-interaction programme.

White-water rafting (per person from Rs 600) is also organised from here for groups of six people or more. The rapids go up to grade 4 and are at their most powerful in August.

Opposite the reserve, next to where the boat leaves, **Dubare Inn** (☎ 08276-267855; Nanjarayapatna; cottages Rs 1400) offers simple, clean brick cottages with river views and an inexpensive **café** (☞ 6am-9pm).

Bylakuppe

☎ 08223

In the exodus from Tibet that followed the 1959 Chinese invasion, thousands of Tibetan refugees settled around Bylakuppe, 5km southeast of Kushalnagar, where the Karnataka government gifted them 1200 hectares of land. The area has since sprouted

several villages centred around monasteries where maroon-and-yellow-robed monks are a common sight and Tibetan arts and crafts are practised. The atmosphere in the villages is heart-warmingly welcoming.

Contact Namdroling Monastery (below) or the **Sera Jey Choeling Centre** (☎ 258723; www.serajeymonastery.org) if you're interested in visiting the settlements for more than a few days, as you will first need to apply for a Protected Area Permit (PAP) from the Ministry of Home Affairs in Delhi.

The area's highlight is the **Namdroling Monastery** (☎ 254036; www.palyul.org), home to the jaw-droppingly spectacular **Golden Temple** (Padmasambhava Buddhist Vihara; 🕒 7am-8pm), presided over by an 18m-high gold-plated Buddha. The temple is in particularly good form when school is in session and it rings out with the gongs, drums and chanting of hundreds of young novices. You're welcome to sit and meditate on it all; look for the small blue guest cushions lying around. The **Zangdogpalri Temple** (🕒 7am-8pm), a similarly ornate affair, is next door.

Opposite the Golden Temple is a shopping centre; on its top floor you'll find the simple **Paljor Dhargey Ling Guest House** (☎ 258686; p_dhargeyling@yahoo.com; r Rs 250). Add Rs 100 if you'd prefer a room with a TV.

Shanti Family Restaurant (Paljor Dhargey Ling Shopping Centre; mains Rs 30-50; 🕒 7am-9.30pm) is a lively place for fresh juices, milk shakes, a good range of Indian meals and Tibetan dishes, such as *momos* (dumplings) and *thukpa* (noodle soup).

Autorickshaws (shared/alone Rs 10/30) ply the route to Sera from Kushalanagar. Buses run frequently to Kushalnagar from Madikeri (Rs 18, 1½ hour) and Hassan (Rs 50, four hours); most buses on the Mysore-Madikeri route stop at Kushalnagar.

Kakkabe

☎ 08272

The region around the village of Kakkabe is an ideal base if you're planning an assault on Kodagu's highest peak, Tadiyendamol. The small and picturesque **Nalakunad Palace** (admission free; 🕒 9am-5pm), 3km from Kakkabe, is the recently restored hunting lodge of a Kodagu king and dates from 1794. Within walking distance of here you'll find several excellent places to stay.

Our pick **Honey Valley Estate** (☎ 238339; huts & r with shared bathroom from Rs 200, d with private bathroom

from Rs 700) is a wonderful place 1250m above sea level where you can wake to the forest's dawn chorus. The owners' friendliness, environmental mindfulness and scrumptious food (with organic veggies from the farm) fully deserve enthusiastic applause. The estate is only accessible by jeep or by a one-hour uphill walk. Bookings are essential.

Old cannonballs border the garden at **Palace Estate** (☎ 238446, 9880447702; www.palaceestate.co.in; s with shared bathroom Rs 250, d with private bathroom Rs 1200), a beautiful homestay run by a hospitable Kodagu family. The rooms, view and home-cooked meals (breakfast Rs 75, lunch or dinner Rs 110) are all excellent. It's just above the Nalakunad Palace.

Also neighbouring Nalakunad Palace is **King's Cottage** (☎ 238464; d Rs 700), a picturesque place offering seven simply furnished rooms and, again, beautiful views. Breakfast is Rs 50, home-cooked Kodava lunch or dinner Rs 100.

The name of tiny **Misty Woods** (☎ 238561; www.coorgmisty.com; cottages incl full board from Rs 4000), immediately uphill from Nalakunad Palace, aptly sums up the landscape surrounding it. The *vastu sashtra*-style cottages made from hollow bricks are roomy enough to sleep three.

Regular buses run to Kakkabe from Madikeri (Rs 20, 1½ hours) and from Virarajendrapet (also called Virajpet, Rs 14, one hour).

HASSAN

☎ 08172 / pop 117,386

With a reasonable range of hotels, a railroad and other conveniences, Hassan is a handy base for exploring Belur (38km), Halebid (33km) and Sravanabelagola (48km). When we passed through, the town centre was looking like Beirut on a bad day; hopefully the road widening project will have been completed by the time you arrive.

Orientation & Information

The train station is 2km east of the town centre on busy Bengaluru-Mangalore (BM) Rd. The Central bus stand is on the corner of AVK College and Bus Stand Rds. The **tourist office** (☎ 268862; AVK College Rd; 🕒 10am-5.30pm Mon-Fri & alternate Sat), 100m east of the bus stand, is one of Karnataka's more helpful. There are plenty of ATMs and internet cafés; try **Cyber Park** (☎ Harsha Mahal Rd; per hr Rs 30). Banks, however, don't offer foreign exchange. The **Southern Star** (☎ 251816; BM Rd) will change dollars at a bad rate.

Sleeping

Vaishnavi Lodging (☎ 263885; Harsha Mahal Rd; s/d Rs 170/235) Steps away from the bus stand, it's cheap, tidy and the sheets are clean. Ask for a room at the back to keep street noise to a minimum.

Hotel Sri Krishna (☎ 263240; fax 233904; BM Rd; s/d from Rs 325/600; 🚽) Not far from the train station, this place has agreeable rooms and a quality pure-veg eatery (mains Rs 30 to 60).

Hotel Suvarna Regency (☎ 266774; www.hotelsuvarnaregency.com; BM Rd; s/d from Rs 350/605; 🚽) This city-centre hotel, just south of Gandhi Sq, offers standard nonflash rooms. Its small swimming pool was out of commission when we dropped by. There's a internet café in the same building.

Southern Star (☎ 251816; www.ushallexushotel sandresorts.com; BM Rd; s/d from Rs 1000/1200; 🚽) Reasonably good rooms and pleasant service make up for the street noise at this smartish hotel across from Hotel Sri Krishna. Its Karwar Restaurant (mains Rs 40 to 100; open 6am to 11pm) is as posh as it gets for Hassan.

Hoysala Village Resort (☎ 256764; www.trailsindia.com; Belur Rd; d incl breakfast from Rs 2960; 🚽 🍷) This rustic and relaxing place is set in pretty gardens (with a tree house), 6km from Hassan on the road to Belur. Rooms are very spacious and comfortable.

Hotel Hassan Ashhok (☎ 268731) Back in the centre of town, Hotel Hassan Ashhok was undergoing major renovations at the time of research; it looks like it might be quite stylish when finished.

Eating

Hotel Sanman (Municipal Office Rd; meals Rs 12-15; 🕒 6am-10pm) Pay upfront and take your pick from *masala dosas* or a rice plate at this busy joint located a block south of the bus station.

Hotel GRR (Bus Stand Rd; meals Rs 15-35; 🕒 11am-11pm) Top-of-the-line Andhra-style thalis (Rs 15) on banana leaves are on offer at this friendly place opposite the bus station.

Suvarna Gate (Hotel Suvarna Regency, BM Rd; mains Rs 40-100; 🕒 noon-3.30pm & 6.30-11.30pm) You'll wait a while for your food but it's worth it. The chicken tandoori masala is delicious and the terrace dining room overlooking neatly trimmed hedges has some ambience. Head to the back of the Hotel Suvarna Regency to find it.

Getting There & Away

BUS

Buses leave from the Central bus stand, situated on the corner of AVK College and Bus Stand Rds. If you're planning to visit Belur and Halebid on the same day from Hassan, go to Halebid first as there are more buses from Belur to Hassan and they run until much later.

Buses to Halebid (Rs 15, one hour, every half hour) start running at 6am, with the last bus back leaving Halebid at 7.30pm. Frequent buses go between Hassan and Belur (Rs 20, one hour); the first leaves Hassan at 6am, and the last bus from Belur is at 10pm.

To get to Sravanabelagola, you must take one of the many buses to Channarayapatna (Rs 20, 45 minutes) and change there.

There are frequent services to Mysore (Rs 65, three hours) Bengaluru (ordinary/deluxe Rs 95/160, four hours), and Mangalore (ordinary/deluxe Rs 95/165, four hours).

TAXI

Taxi drivers hang out on AVK College Rd, north of the bus stand. A tour of Belur and Halebid will cost you about Rs 700 for the day. A return taxi to Sravanabelagola will cost the same. Firmly set the price before departure.

TRAIN

The well-organised **train station** (☎ 268222) is about 2km east of town (Rs 10 by autorickshaw); it has a cloakroom (Rs 10) and retiring rooms (Rs 100). Three passenger trains head to Mysore daily (2nd class Rs 22, three hours); the one at 2.20pm is a fast passenger train (two hours). For Bengaluru, take one of the four daily trains to Arsikere (Rs 11, one hour) and change there. Services to Mangalore (2nd class Rs 38, five hours) are expected to be running now.

BELUR & HALEBID

☎ 08177 / elev 968m

The Hoysala temples at Halebid (also known as Halebeed, Halebidu and Halebeedu) and Belur, along with the temple at Somnathpur (p903), are the apex of one of the most artistically exuberant periods of Hindu cultural development. Their sculptural decoration rivals that of Khajuraho (Madhya Pradesh; p673) and Konark (Orissa; p648).

If you're staying overnight (although it's not really necessary), Belur is a better bet than Halebid.

Belur and Halebid are only 16km apart. Buses shuttle between the two towns every 30 minutes or so from 6.30am to 7pm (Rs 11, 30 minutes). See p909 for details of buses to/from Hassan. Belur also has direct buses to Bengaluru (Rs 120, five hours). To get to Hampi, catch a bus from Belur to Kadur (Rs 14, one hour), then take a bus to Shimoga. Buses leave Shimoga frequently for Hospet, the access town for Hampi.

Belur

The **Chanekeshava Temple** (Temple Rd; admission free; ☞ dawn-dusk) is the only one at the three major Hoysala sites still in daily use – try to be there for the *puja* ceremonies at 9am, 3pm and 7.30pm. Begun in 1116 to commemorate the Hoysalas' victory over the Cholas at Talakad, work on the temple continued for over a century. Although its exterior lower friezes are not as extensively sculpted as those of the other Hoysala temples, the work higher up is unsurpassed in detail and artistry. Particularly intriguing are the angled bracket figures depicting women in ritual dancing poses. Note that the front of the temple is reserved for images of dancers and characters from the *Kamasutra*; the back is strictly for gods. Plentiful decorative work also lines the internal supporting pillars (no two of which are identical) and lintels. Allegedly every major Hindu deity is represented here.

The temple grounds are worth a wander, with their smaller, ageing temples and 14th-century seven-storey *gopuram*, which has some sensual sculptures explicitly portraying the après-temple activities of dancing girls.

Guides can be hired for Rs 125; they help to bring some of the sculptural detail to life.

The other, lesser, Hoysala temples at Belur are the **Chennigaraya** and the **Viranarayana** temples.

Vishnu Regency (☎ 223011; www.hoysalaturism.com; Kempegowda Rd; d/tr from Rs 400/500; ☑) is clearly the best of Belur's none-too-salubrious hotels. Its simple rooms are clean and fresh smelling, there's a resident astrologer on hand and it has a pleasant **restaurant** (mains Rs 20-65; ☞ 11.30am-10.30pm) serving North Indian and Chinese food. From the bus stand, walk up Temple Rd and turn left at the statue of Kempegowda.

Near Kempegowda's statue is **Shankar Hotel** (Temple Rd; meals Rs 20; ☞ 7am-9.30pm), a busy place serving fine South Indian thalis, *masala dosas*, Indian sweets, snacks and drinks.

Halebid

Construction began on Halebid's **Hoysaleswara Temple** (☞ dawn-dusk) around 1121. Despite more than 80 years of labour it was never completed, but it's still the most outstanding example of Hoysala architecture. The entire outside and some of the interior is covered with a riot of Hindu deities, sages, stylised animals and friezes depicting the life of the Hoysala rulers.

The temple is set in large well-tended gardens, adjacent to which is a small **museum** (admission Rs 2; ☞ 10am-5pm Sat-Thu) housing a collection of sculptures.

Halebid also has a smaller temple known as **Kedareswara** and a little-visited enclosure containing three **Jain** temples, which also have fine carvings. These are peacefully tout free.

HOYSALA ARCHITECTURE

The Hoysalas, who ruled this part of the Deccan between the 11th and 13th centuries, originated in the hill tribes of the Western Ghats and for a long time were feudatories of the Chalukyas. They didn't become fully independent until about 1190, though they first rose to prominence under their leader Tinayaditya (1047-78), who took advantage of the waning power of the Gangas and Rashtrakutas. Under Bittiga (1110-52), later named Vishnuvardhana, they began to take off on a course of their own; it was during his reign that the distinctive temples at Belur and Halebid were built.

Typically, these temples are squat, star-shaped structures set on a platform. They are more human in scale than the soaring temples found elsewhere in India, but what they lack in size they make up for in sheer intricacy.

It's quickly apparent from a study of these sculptures that the arts of music and dance were highly regarded during the Hoysala period. It also seems that these were times of a relatively high degree of sexual freedom and prominent female participation in public affairs.

The Hoysalas converted to Jainism in the 10th century, but took up Hinduism in the 11th century. This is why images of Shaivite, Vaishnavite and Jain sects coexist in their temples.

The saving grace of the otherwise shoddy **KSTDC Mayura Shantala** (☎ 273224; d/q with shared bathroom Rs 250/350) is its reasonably quiet garden compound, which is about the nicest place to grab refreshments in town. Four plain rooms offer shelter if you're really stuck.

SRAVANABELAGOLA

☎ 08176

Atop the bald rock of Vindhyagiri Hill, the 17.5m-high statue of the Jain deity Gomateshvara (Bahubali), said to be the world's tallest monolithic statue, is visible long before you reach the pilgrimage town of Sravanabelagola. Viewing the statue close up is the main reason for heading to this sedate town, whose name means 'the Monk of the White Pond'. The statue's simplicity and serenity is in complete contrast to the complexity and energy of the sculptural work at the Belur and Halebid temples.

In the 3rd century BC, Chandragupta Maurya came here with his guru, Bhagwan Bhadrabahu Swami, after renouncing his kingdom. Bhadrabahu's disciples spread his teachings all over the region, firmly planting Jainism in southern soils. The religion found powerful patrons in the Gangas, who ruled southern Karnataka between the 4th and 10th centuries, the zenith of Jainism's influence.

Information

The helpful **tourist office** (☎ 257254; ☎ 10am-5.30pm) is in a new complex at the foot of Vindhyagiri Hill. There are plans for the complex to include an audiovisual interpretation display, a café and a gift store. Though there are no entry fees to the sites in Sravanabelagola, donations are encouraged.

Sights

GOMATESHVARA STATUE

The naked statue of **Gomateshvara** (Bahubali; ☎ 6am-6.15pm), reached via 614 rock-cut steps up Vindhyagiri Hill, was commissioned by a military commander in the service of the Ganga king Rachamalla and carved out of granite by the sculptor Aristenemi in AD 981.

Bahubali's father was the great Emperor Vishabhadeva, who became the first Jain *tirthankar* (revered Jain teacher), Adinath. Bahubali and his brother Bharatha competed fiercely for the right to succeed their father but, on the point of victory, Bahubali realised the futility of the struggle and renounced

his kingdom. He withdrew from the material world, entered the forest and meditated in complete stillness until he attained enlightenment. The statue has vines curling around his legs and an ant hill at his feet, signs of his utter detachment. The gallery around his statue has many smaller images of Jain *tirthankars*.

You must leave your shoes at the foot of the hill; if the rocks are hot it's OK to wear socks. Those who prefer not to tackle the steps can hire a *dholi* (man-carried portable chair) with bearers for Rs 150; the *dholi* can be hired from 7am to 12.30pm and 3pm to 5.30pm.

Every 12 years, millions flock here to attend the Mahamastakabhisheka ceremony, which involves the statue being doused in all manner of fluids, pastes, powders, precious metals and stones. The next ceremony will be around January 2018.

TEMPLES

In addition to the Bahubali statue, there are several interesting Jain temples in the town and on Chandragiri Hill, the smaller of the two hills between which Sravanabelagola is nestled.

The **Chandragupta Basti** (Chandragupta Community; ☎ 6am-6pm), on Chandragiri Hill, is believed to have been built by Emperor Ashoka. The Hoysala-style **Bhandari Basti** (Bhandari Community; ☎ 6am-6pm), in the southeast corner of town, is Sravanabelagola's largest temple. Nearby, **Chandranatha Basti** (Chandranatha Community; ☎ 6am-6pm) has well-preserved paintings resembling a 650-year-old comic strip of Jain stories.

Sleeping & Eating

The local Jain organisation **SDJMI** (☎ 257258) handles bookings for its 15 guesthouses; the office is behind the Vidyananda Nilaya Dharamsala, past the post office and before the bus stand on the way into town. Most foreigners find themselves bunked at the simple and well-maintained **Yathri Nivas** (d/tr Rs 135/160).

Hotel Raghu (☎ 257238; d from Rs 200; 🍴), Sravanabelagola's only privately owned hotel, offers a range of dingy rooms, some with TV and AC; it's just at the foot of Vindhyagiri Hill. It also has a busy vegetarian **restaurant** (mains Rs 20-40; ☎ 6am-9pm).

Getting There & Away

No buses go direct from Sravanabelagola to Hassan or Belur – you must go to Channarayana (Rs 8, 20 minutes) and catch an onward connection there. Three direct buses a day run to

both Bengaluru (Rs 74, 3½ hours) and Mysore (Rs 45, 2½ hours). Nearly all long-distance buses leave before 3pm; if you miss these, catch a local bus to Channarayapatna, 10km north-west, which is on the main Bengaluru–Mangalore road and has lots of connections.

KARNATAKA COAST

MANGALORE

☎ 0824 / pop 398,745

Situated at the point where the Netravati and Gurupur Rivers flow into the Arabian Sea, Mangalore has been a pit stop on international trade routes since the 6th century AD. It was the major port of Hyder Ali's kingdom, and today the region's coffee and cashew crops are still shipped out from the modern port, which is 10km north of the city.

Not an especially picturesque place, Mangalore is the largest city on Karnataka's coast, and therefore is a useful place to stop for amenities. It's not without its tourist charms, however, chief of which is quiet Ullal Beach, 12km south of the city.

Orientation

Mangalore is hilly, with winding, disorienting streets. Luckily most hotels and restaurants, the bus stand and the train station are in or around the frenzied city centre, and are easy to find. Less handily, the KSRTC long-distance bus stand is 3km to the north.

Information

ATMs and internet cafés are everywhere, and several banks in town also have foreign-exchange facilities.

Athree Book Centre (Balmatta Rd; ☎ 8.30am-1pm & 2.30-8pm Mon-Sat)

Higginbothams (Lighthouse Hill Rd; ☎ 9.30am-1.30pm & 3.30-7.30pm Mon-Sat) Bookshop.

KSTDC tourist office (☎ 2442926; Lighthouse Hill Rd; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat) Mostly useless.

Trade Wings (☎ 2427225; Lighthouse Hill Rd;

☎ 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat) Travel agency that's the best place to change travellers cheques.

Sights

Catholicism's roots in Mangalore date back to the arrival of the Portuguese in the 1520s, and today the city is liberally dotted with churches. One of the most impressive is the Sistine Chapel-like **St Aloysius College Chapel**

(Lighthouse Hill; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon & 2-6pm Sun), with its walls and ceilings painted with brilliant frescoes. Nearby are the restful gardens of **Tagore Park**.

Sultan's Battery (Sultan Battery Rd; admission free; ☎ 6am-6pm), the only remnant of Tipu Sultan's fort, is 4km from the centre on the headland of the old port; bus 16 will get you there. Take bus 19 to **Shreemanthi Bai Memorial Government Museum** (☎ 2211106; admission Rs 2; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Sun), which has a motley collection that's worth a browse; check out the leather shadow puppets.

The attractive Kerala-style **Kadri Manjunatha Temple** (Kadri; ☎ 6am-1pm & 4-8pm) houses a 1000-year-old bronze statue of Lokeshwara. *Puja* (prayers) at the temple is at 8am, noon and 8pm; take bus 3, 4 or 6.

Serene **Ullal Beach** is best enjoyed at Summer Sands Beach Resort (opposite), which costs Rs 25 to enter (redeemable against food or drink at its restaurant) and Rs 60 to use the pool. An autorickshaw is Rs 150 one way, or the frequent bus 44A (Rs 7) from the City bus stand will drop you right outside the gate. Buses 44C or 44D also go to Ullal.

Sleeping

The humidity means few hotels are free from damp.

BUDGET

Hotel Surya (☎ 2425736; Balmatta Rd; s/d/tr from Rs 175/225/275; ☎ ☎) Set back from the road near Lalith Restaurant, Hotel Surya has simple rooms with tiled floors and walls that could do with a lick of paint. The staff are friendly.

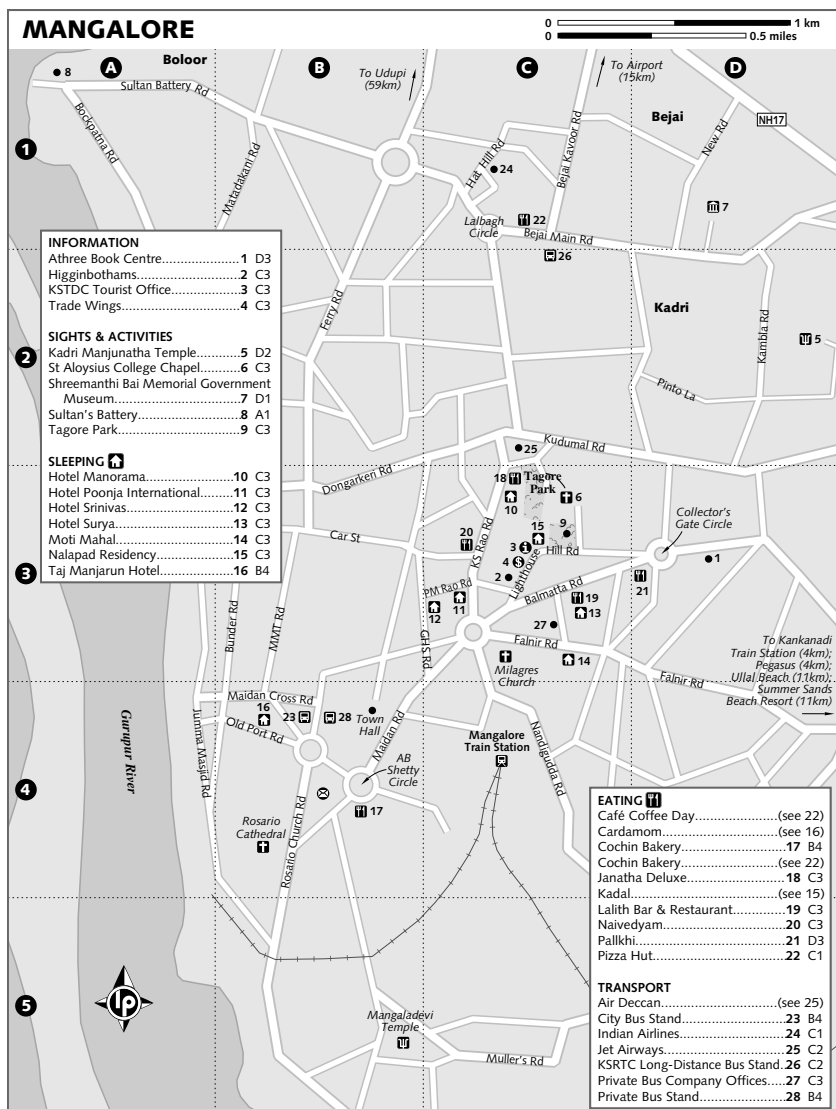
Hotel Manorama (☎ 2440306; KS Rao Rd; s/d from Rs 250/360; ☎ ☎) This cheapie is a clear cut above other budget options. The superclean rooms have a sparse 1940s feel to them; the bathrooms have squat toilets.

Hotel Srinivas (☎ 2440061; www.hotelsrinivas.com; GHS Rd; s/d from Rs 400/525; ☎ ☎) Central and reasonably clean, but really nothing to write home about.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

Hotel Poonja International (☎ 2440171; www.hotelpoonjainternational.com; KS Rao Rd; s/d from Rs 600/800; ☎ ☎) Offers a good location, professional staff and reasonably comfortable no-frills rooms at decent prices.

Nalapad Residency (☎ 2424757; www.nalapad.com; Lighthouse Hill Rd; s/d from Rs 650/750; ☎ ☎) Ask for a room with a sea view at the hilltop Nalapad.



Nice touches such as terracotta-tile ceilings in the lobby are, sadly, not replicated in the plain rooms.

Moti Mahal (☎ 2441411; www.motimahalmangalore.com; Falnir Rd; s/d incl breakfast from Rs 950/1250; 🚗 🚲) The selling point of this average hotel is its big outdoor pool and gym. There are also three restaurants.

Summer Sands Beach Resort (☎ 2467690; www.summer-sands.com; d from Rs 970; 🚗 🚲) Set amid leafy grounds beside Ullal Beach, Summer Sands' rustic bungalows are the ideal place for a quiet retreat. The Summer Place Restaurant (mains Rs 40 to 90) has plenty of fresh fish, as well as the sound of the ocean nearby.

Taj Manjarun Hotel (☎ 2420420; www.tajhotels.com; Old Port Rd; s/d Indian from Rs 1800/2300, foreigner from US\$70/80; 🍴 📺 📺) This business-level Taj is head and shoulders above the rest of Mangalore's hotels. It has all the services you'd expect at one of its five-star sisters.

Eating

While in town sample some Mangalorean-style seafood, including local specialities such as *kane* (ladyfish) either served in a spicy coconut-based curry or fried in crumbs of *rava* (semolina). Unless mentioned, places are open 6.30am to 11pm.

Janatha Deluxe (Hotel Shaan Plaza, KS Rao Rd; mains Rs 20-45) This local favourite serves good thalis (Rs 23) and a range of North and South Indian veg dishes.

Lalith Bar & Restaurant (Balmatta Rd; mains Rs 30-100; 🍴 9am-3pm & 5.30-11pm) Unwind in the Lalith's cool, dark interior while enjoying a cocktail or seafood (prawns, crab, kingfish) from its extensive menu.

Naivedyam (1st fl, Hotel Mangalore International, KS Rao Rd; mains Rs 40-80) As well as an extensive selection of veg cuisine, Naivedyam has an interesting range of tandoori dishes.

Palkhi (☎ 2444929; 3rd fl, Tej Towers, Balmatta Rd; mains Rs 85-125; 🍴 12.30-3pm & 7-11.30pm) This relatively smart place has a good reputation for its seafood.

Pegasus (☎ 2240120; Sutej Baug, NH17, Jeppina Mogaru; mains Rs 80-200; 🍴 11.30am-3pm & 6.30-11.30pm) All manner of tasty seafood dishes are served in the octagonal dining room at Pegasus. It's

about 1.5 km south of Pumpwell Circle on the Kerala road.

Kadal (7th fl, Nalapad Residency, Lighthouse Hill Rd; mains Rs 120; 🍴 11.30am-3.30pm & 7.30pm-midnight) This high-rise restaurant has the best city views. Try the spicy chicken *varval* (a coastal Karnataka style of curry) or one of the fish dishes.

Cardamom (Taj Manjarun Hotel, Old Port Rd; mains Rs 100-300) The Taj's main restaurant is a slick affair. The daily buffet lunch (Rs 295) offers a delicious spread, and there's live music in the evening from Wednesday to Saturday.

If you're hungering for Western food, head to **Bharath Mall** (Bejai Main Rd; 🍴 10am-10pm) close to Lalbagh Circle where you'll find branches of Pizza Hut and Café Coffee Day. For desserts, try **Cochin Bakery** (AB Shetty Circle; cakes Rs 5-10; 🍴 9.15am-9pm Mon-Fri, 9.15am-1.30pm Sat) for its paneer puffs, pineapple lardy cake and other baked goods.

Getting There & Away

AIR

About 3.5km out of town, **Indian Airlines** (☎ 2254254; Hathill Rd) flies daily to Mumbai (Rs 2965, 1¼ hours). **Jet Airways** (☎ 2441181; Ram Bhavan Complex, KS Rao Rd) has two daily flights to Mumbai (US\$175) and one to Bengaluru (US\$102, 45 minutes). In the same complex you'll find **Air Deccan** (☎ 2496948), which also flies twice daily to Bengaluru (Rs 1474).

BUS

The **KSRTC long-distance bus stand** (☎ 2211243; Bejai Main Rd) is 3km north of the city centre; an au-

BUSES FROM MANGALORE

Destination	Fare (Rs)	Duration (hr)	Frequency
Bengaluru	180 (D)/303 (R)/375 (V)	9/7½/7½	several daily
Chennai	750 (V)	16	1 daily
Hassan	102 (D)	4½	several daily
Hospet	201 (D)	11	1 daily
Kasaragod	25 (D)	1½	every 30min
Kochi	340 (R)	9	1 daily
Kundupur	48 (D)	2½	several daily
Madikeri	72	4½	several daily
Mumbai	810 (V)	17	1 daily
Mysore	132 (D)/222 (R)/275 (V)	8	several daily
Panaji	170 (D)/302 (R)	9	3 daily
Udupi	29 (D)	1½	several daily

D – semideluxe/regular, R – Rajahamsa, V – Volvo AC

torickshaw there costs about Rs 20. It's quite orderly, with bus services to the destinations listed on opposite.

Private buses heading to destinations including Udupi, Sringeri, Mudabidri and Jog Falls run from opposite the City bus stand. Tickets can be purchased at offices near Falnir Rd.

Be warned that the roads to Managlore from the Deccan plateau (and parts of the coastal highway) are pot-hole hell during the monsoon and usually for several months after.

TRAIN

The main **train station** (☎ 2423137) is south of the city centre. The 12.10pm *Matsyagandha Express* stops at Margao (sleeper/2AC Rs 217/843, five hours) in Goa, and continues to Mumbai (sleeper/2AC Rs 393/1631, 16 hours). The 5.50pm *Malabar Express* heads to Thiruvananthapuram (Trivandrum; sleeper/2AC Rs 261/1096, 15½ hours). Express trains to Chennai (sleeper/2AC Rs 338/1384, 17 hours) depart at 1.15pm and 9.15pm.

Several Konkan Railway trains (to Mumbai, Margao, Ernakulam or Trivandrum) use **Kankanadi train station** (☎ 2437824), 5km east of the city.

Getting Around

The airport is about 22km north of the city. Take bus 47B or 47C from the City bus stand or catch a taxi (Rs 300). Indian Airlines has a free airport shuttle for its passengers.

The City bus stand is opposite the State Bank of India, close to the Taj Manjarun Hotel. Flag fall for autorickshaws is Rs 11, and they cost Rs 11 per kilometre thereafter. For late-night travel, add on 50%. An autorickshaw to Kankanadi station costs around Rs 40, or take bus 9 or 11B.

DHARMASTALA

Inland from Mangalore are a string of Jain temple towns, including Venur, Mudabidri and Karkal. The most interesting is Dharmastala, 75km east of Mangalore on the banks of the Nethravathi River. In a remarkable show of organisation, the town hosts an average 10,000 pilgrims a day, and 10 times as many on major holidays and during the town's festival season (see p882).

Three elephants are on hand to bless pilgrims outside the nondenominational **Manjunatha Temple** (☎ 6.30am-2pm & 6.30-8.30pm); men entering the temple should do so bare chested

and, preferably, wearing long trousers. Simple free meals are available in the temple's **kitchen** (☎ 11.30am-2.15pm & 7.30-10pm), which is attached to a hall that can seat up to 3000. It gets through around 2500kg of rice a day!

Elsewhere in this lively town there's a 12m-high **statue of Bahubali**; the **Manjusha Museum** (Rs 2; ☎ 10am-1pm & 4.30-9pm) housing a collection of Indian stone and metal sculptures, jewellery and local craft products; and, best of all, the **Car Museum** (admission Rs 3; ☎ 8.30am-1pm & 2-7pm), home to 48 vintage autos, including a 1903 Renault, a monster of a Cadillac from 1954 and a 1983 Datsun!

Should you wish to stay in Dharmastala, contact the helpful **temple office** (☎ 08256-277121; www.shridharmasthala.org), which can arrange accommodation for Rs 50 per person in one of its pilgrim lodges.

There are frequent buses to Dharmastala from Mangalore (Rs 30, two hours).

UDUPI (UDIPI)

☎ 0820

Vaishnavite pilgrims come to Udupi to visit its **Krishna Temple** (☎ 2520598; Car St; ☎ 5.30am-8.30pm), dating from the 13th century. Surrounded by eight *maths* (monasteries), the atmospheric temple is a hive of activity, with musicians playing at the entrance, elephants on hand for *puja*, and pilgrims constantly coming and going. *Darshan* (viewing of a deity) is available to non-Hindus; men must enter the main shrine bare chested.

Near the temple, above the Corp Bank ATM, the **tourist office** (☎ 2529718; Krishna Bldg, Car St; ☎ 10am-1.30pm & 2.30-5.30pm Mon-Sat) is a useful source of advice on Udupi and the surrounding area.

Udupi is famed for its vegetarian food – it's particularly well known for creating the *masala dosa*. A good place to sample the local fair is **Woodlands** (Dr UR Rao Complex; ☎ 8am-9.30pm), a short walk south of the temple. It serves dosas before 11.30pm and after 3.30pm. In between you can get a pretty good thali (Rs 30 to 43).

Udupi is 58km north of Mangalore along the coast; regular buses run here from Mangalore (Rs 29, 1½ hours).

MALPE

☎ 0820

The fishing harbour of Malpe is set on the coast, 4km from Udupi. From Malpe it's possible to take a boat (Rs 70 per person) out to

tiny **St Mary's Island**, where Vasco da Gama is said to have landed in 1498. At weekends the island is busy with groups of locals inspecting the curious hexagonal basalt rock formations that jut out of the sand; during the week you might just have it to yourself.

Paradise Isle Beach Resort (☎ 2537300; www.theparadiseisle.com; s/d Rs 3000/3500; 🏠 📶 🚶) is right on Malpe Beach, about 2km north of the harbour, with a clear view of St Mary's Island. It lacks atmosphere but the rooms are comfortable and clean. Students from the nearby university at Manipal converge here on Saturdays to drink and dance at the hotel's disco. The neighbouring food court is the only spot to grab a meal.

An autorickshaw from Udupi to Malpe is Rs 50.

AMGOL

Head inland for 6km from Kundapura on National Highway 17 to the sleepy village of Basrur on the banks of the Varahi River. A punted boat will then transport you the 200m across to the slender private island of **Amgol** (r per person incl full board Rs 1500), which is no more than 750m long and is home to just five rustic rooms. To stay at this tranquil spot book through **Soans Holidays** (☎ 08254-231683; www.soans.com). On the way to the village is one of the racing areas for Kambla (see Buffalo Surfing, opposite).

MURUDESHWAR

☎ 08385

There are pleasant beaches at this sacred site where the pretty little Shiva temple is overshadowed by a 40m-high idol of the deity (the tallest in the world) and a stupendous 83m-tall *gopuram*. If you think the Shiva statue looks lopsided, it's because one of his four arms blew off in a storm.

Accommodation is no problem, with the **RNS Residency** (☎ 260060, 268901; www.naveenhotels.com; r from Rs 900; 🏠 📶) and the **Naveen Beach Resort** (☎ 260415, 260428; www.naveenhotels.com; r from Rs 1400; 🏠) offering decent rooms with sea views. Perched over the waves, the Naveen Beach Restaurant does excellent Punjabi or South Indian thalis (Rs 25 to 45), as well as ice-cream sundaes.

Murudeshwar is just off the coastal highway, 163km north of Mangalore and 70km south of Gokarna. Trains on the **Konkan Railway** (www.konkanrailway.com), which connects Goa with Mumbai and Mangalore, stop here.

JOG FALLS

☎ 08186

Jog Falls might be the highest waterfalls in India, but unless you visit during the monsoon they're not that exciting; the Linganamakki Dam further up the Sharavati River limits the water flow. The longest of the four falls is the Raja, which drops 293m.

The viewing area close to the bus stand is scrappy. The best thing you can do if you come here is to hike to the foot of the falls, accessible by a 1200-plus step path – it will take around one hour to get down and two to get up. Watch out for leeches in the wet season.

The friendly **tourist office** (☎ 244732; 🕒 10am–5pm Mon–Sat) is above the food stalls close to the bus stand.

Jog Falls has two inspection bungalows, usually reserved for VIPs. The **British Bungalow** (☎ 08389-230134; r Rs 100) sits atop the falls about 3km from the bus stand. The **PW Guesthouse** (☎ 08183-226213; per person Rs 250), across from the KSTDC hotel, is pretty fancy.

The **KSTDC Hotel Mayura Gerusoppa** (☎ 244732; s/d Rs 300/400), about 150m from the car park, has enormous, musty rooms.

Stalls near the bus stand serve omelettes, thalis, noodles and rice dishes, plus hot and cold drinks. KSTDC's mediocre **restaurant** (meals Rs 20–40) is just next door.

Jog Falls has buses roughly every hour to Shimoga (Rs 45, three hours) and to Sagar (Rs 13, one hour), two a day to Siddapur (Rs 10, one hour) and three daily to Karwar via Kumta (Rs 38, three hours), where you can change for Gokarna (Rs 12, 45 minutes). There are two painfully slow daily buses to/from Mangalore (Rs 112, eight hours); you may be better off going via Shimoga.

GOKARNA

☎ 08386

Sun worshippers and Hindu pilgrims rub shoulders in the low-key village of Gokarna (Cow's Ear), 50km south of Karwar. The quaint village is a holy place, which you should bear in mind if sunbaking is your objective. Modesty is your best policy; keep shoulders and knees covered, and take your parties to the out-of-town beaches.

Information

There are lots of places to access the internet, including many of the guesthouses.

BUFFALO SURFING

Kambala, the Canarese sport of buffalo racing, first became popular in the early part of the 20th century, when farmers would race their buffaloes home after a day in the fields. Today the best of the races have hit the big time, with thousands of spectators attending. The valuable racing buffaloes are pampered and prepared like thoroughbreds – a good animal can cost more than Rs 300,000.

The events are held in the Dakshina Kannada region between November and March, usually on a weekend. Parallel tracks (120m long) are laid out in a paddy field, and the fastest pairs of buffaloes can cover the distance through water and mud in around 14 seconds. There are two versions: in one, the man runs alongside the buffalo; in the other, he rides on a board fixed to a ploughshare, literally surfing his way down the track behind the beasts. And if you don't think these lumbering beasts can really move, look out!

Shree Radhakrishna Bookstore (Car St; ☎ 10am–6pm) Good selection of new and second-hand books.

Pai STD Shop (Main St; ☎ 9am–9pm) Changes cash and travellers cheques and gives advances on Visa.

Sub post office (1st fl, cnr Car & Main Sts)

Sights & Activities

TEMPLES

Foreigners are not allowed inside Gokarna's temples, but you'll certainly bear witness to religious rituals around town. At the western end of Car St is the **Mahabaleshwara Temple**, home to a revered lingam (phallic image of Shiva). Nearby is the **Ganapati Temple**, which honours the role Ganesh played in rescuing the lingam. At the other end of the street is the **Venkataraman Temple**, and 100m south of this is **Koorti Teertha**, the large temple tank (reservoir), where locals, pilgrims and immaculately dressed Brahmans perform their ablutions next to dhobi-wallahs (people who wash clothes) on the ghats (steps or landings).

BEACHES

Gokarna's 'town beach' suffers from litter: the best sands are reached via a footpath that begins on the southern side of the Ganapati Temple and heads southward (if you reach the bathing tank – or find yourself clawing up rocks – you're on the wrong path).

Twenty minutes on the path will bring you to the top of a barren headland with expansive sea views. On the southern side is **Kudle** (*kood-lee*), the first in a series of four lovely beaches. Basic snacks, drinks and accommodation are available here.

At the southern end of Kudle Beach, a track climbs over the next headland, and a further 20-minute walk brings you to **Om Beach**, with a handful of chai (tea) shops and shacks. A

sealed road provides vehicle access to Om, but it's generally deserted except on holidays and weekends, when day-trippers come by the carload. To the south, the more isolated **Half-Moon Beach** and **Paradise Beach** are a 30-minute and one-hour walk, respectively.

Depending on demand, boats run from Gokarna Beach (look for the fishermen) to Kudle (Rs 100) and Om (Rs 200). An autorickshaw from town costs Rs 200 to Om Beach.

Don't walk between the beaches and Gokarna after dark, and don't walk alone at any time – it's easy to slip on the paths or get lost, and muggings have occurred. For a small fee, most lodges in Gokarna will safely stow valuables and baggage while you chill out in the beach huts.

AYURVEDA

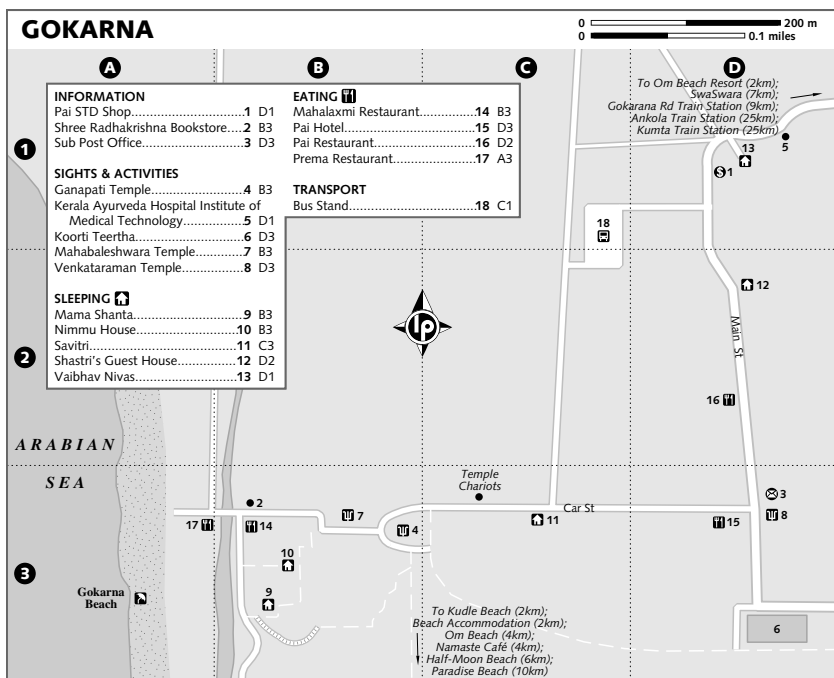
Apart from Ayurveda centres at SwaSwara (p918) and Om Beach Resort (p919), a good range of Ayurvedic treatments are available at the **Kerala Ayurveda Hospital Institute of Medical Technology** (☎ 9945702596; www.keralaayurvedagokarn.com; Kamat Complex, Main St; ☎ 8am–8pm). Prices kick off with a general massage for Rs 400.

Sleeping

With a few exceptions the choice here is between a rudimentary shack on the beach or a basic but more comfortable room in town.

BEACHES

Both Kudle and Om Beaches have several budget options in the form of huts and rooms – shop around. Huts and basic restaurants open up on Half-Moon and Paradise Beaches from late November to March. Most places provide at least a bedroll, but you will want to bring your own sleeping sheet or sleeping



bag. Padlocks are provided and huts are secure. Communal washing and toilet facilities are simple.

Spanish Place (☎ 257311; Kudle Beach; huts with shared bathroom Rs 70, d Rs 250; 🏠) This chilled spot in the middle stretch of Kudle Beach has palm-thatch huts, and two lovely garden rooms with private shower but common 'toilet' (ie the bushes).

Namaste (☎ 257141; Om Beach; s with shared bathroom Rs 100, deluxe hut with private bathroom Rs 400; 🏠) In and out of season, Namaste is the place to hang. Its spacious restaurant-bar does good food and is the premier Om chill-out spot. In season it also offers basic huts (Rs 50) at Paradise Beach and cottages at Namaste Farm (from Rs 300) on Kudle Beach.

Swaswara (☎ 0484-2668221; www.swaswara.com; Om Beach; r incl breakfast from US\$300; 🍴 🏠 📺) Using the red laterite stone, this beautifully designed and unobtrusive resort provides a luxurious base for a holiday based around yoga and Ayurvedic treatments. Rates include taxes and yoga sessions. Guests are encouraged to pop into the kitchens to learn from the cooks and exchange culinary tips.

GOKARNA

Most guesthouses in town offer discounts in the low season.

Vaibhav Nivas (☎ 256714; off Main St; r with shared bathroom Rs 80, s/d/tr with private bathroom from Rs 75/100/200; 🏠) The cell-like rooms at this place tucked away from the main drag come with mosquito nets and hot water in the morning. There's also a rooftop restaurant.

Mama Shanta (☎ 256213; r with shared/private bathroom Rs 100/200; ☁ Oct-May) Just past Nimmu House, you'll find this homestay run by a kindly old soul who rents out very basic rooms a hop away from the beach.

Shastri's Guest House (☎ 256220; dr _murti@rediffmail.com; Main St; r Rs 125-150) The singles are claustrophobic, but the doubles out the back are big and sunny; some have balconies and palm-tree views. New rooms were being added at the time of research.

Nimmu House (☎ 256730; nimmuhouse@yahoo.com; s/d from Rs 150/300; 🏠) The best of the budget brigade, Nimmu House has recently renovated a block to provide pleasant tiled-floor rooms with balconies. The management are very friendly.

Savitri (☎ 256720; Car St; d from Rs 200) In the middle of town, this new place offers spotless, simply furnished rooms.

Om Beach Resort (☎ 257052; www.ombeachresort.com; Bangle Gудde; d incl full board US\$40; ♿ ♿) This small resort is, confusingly, not at Om Beach but on the headland, about 2km out of Gokarna off the Om Beach road. Accommodation is in nicely decorated rooms in brick cottages with views out to the coast. Rates include taxes. There's a professional Ayurvedic centre on site with various treatment packages available.

Eating

The chai shops on all of the beaches rustle up basic snacks and meals.

Prema Restaurant (meals Rs 20-60; ☎ 8am-9pm) Closest place to the town beach, Prema whips up a decent *masala dosa* (Rs 15) and thali (Rs 30), along with traveller treats, such as coffee milk shakes, and yogurt with muesli and honey.

Mahalaxmi Restaurant (meals Rs 30-70) This popular traveller hang-out promises 'all types of world famous dishes' (ie banana pancakes and cornflakes) in myriad ways. It also has a handful of simple rooms to rent (Rs 150).

Namaste Café (meals Rs 30-80; ☎ 7am-11pm) Om Beach's social centre serves OK Western stand-bys – pizzas and burgers – and some Israeli specials.

A couple of decent vegetarian places in Gokarna:

Pai Hotel (Car St; mains Rs 15-30; ☎ 6am-9.30pm)

Pai Restaurant (Main St; mains Rs 20-40; ☎ 6.30am-9.30pm)

Getting There & Away

BUS

From Gokarna's **bus stand** (☎ 279487), one bus daily heads to Margao (Rs 65, four hours); alternatively you can go to Karwar (Rs 29, 1½ hours, three daily), which has connections to Goa. Direct buses run to Hubli (Rs 86, four hours, five daily), and a daily 6.45am bus goes direct to Mangalore (Rs 129, six hours), continuing on to Mysore (Rs 328, 14 hours). If you miss this, get an hourly local bus to Kumta, 25km south, then one of the frequent Mangalore buses from there. Daily buses set off to Hospet (Rs 165, nine hours) for Hampi at 7am and 2.30pm. There's an ordinary bus to Bengaluru (Rs 257, 12 hours) at 5pm and a deluxe one (Rs 432) at 7pm.

TRAIN

The Konkan Railway is the best way to reach Goa and Mangalore, among other destinations, though only slow passenger trains stop at **Gokarna Rd train station** (☎ 279487), 9km from town. A noon train heads to Margao (Rs 23, two hours); another leaves at 4.25pm (Rs 54, 1½ hours). For Mangalore (Rs 44, five hours), trains depart at 5pm and 3am. Trains head to Kochi (Cochin; sleeper Rs 281, 15 hours) on Saturday and Sunday; you must buy a sleeper ticket and upgrade, if you like, upon boarding. Many of the hotels and small travel agencies in Gokarna can book tickets.

Autorickshaws charge Rs 100 to take you out to the station, but buses go hourly (Rs 7) and also meet arriving passenger trains.

Several express trains stop at Ankola and Kumta stations, both about 25km from Gokarna and accessible by local bus.

CENTRAL KARNATAKA

HAMPI

☎ 08394

The fascinating ruins of the 15th-century city of Vijayanagar, near the village of Hampi, are set in an extraordinary landscape of giant granite boulders, lush paddies and banana plantations. The clock seems to have stopped at this World Heritage site, and you can spend a surprisingly large amount of time gazing at the weirdly balanced rocks, wondering how millions of years of erosion could achieve such formations.

Given its magical atmosphere, Hampi is a major pit stop on the traveller circuit, with November to March (the cooler months) being the peak season. The ruins cover a wide area, but it's possible to see the main sites in a day or two. However, this goes against Hampi's relaxed grain, so plan on lingering for a while.

History

In the Hindu legends of Ramayana, this area was Kishkinda, the realm of the monkey gods. In 1336 the Telugu princes Harihara and Bukka founded the city of Vijayanagar, which over the next couple of centuries grew into one of the largest Hindu empires in Indian history (see the Struggle for the Soul of India, p44).

By the 16th century, the greater metropolitan region of Vijayanagar, surrounded

by seven lines of fortification, covered 650 sq km and had a population of about 500,000. Vijayanagar's busy bazaars were centres of international commerce, brimming with precious stones and merchants from faraway lands. This all came to a sudden end in 1565 when the city was ransacked by a confederacy of Deccan sultanates; it subsequently went into terminal decline.

Today's battles are being waged between those who want to protect what's left of Hampi's ruins and the people who now live there. Although it was declared a World Heritage site in 1986, only 58 of the 550 monuments in the area hold heritage-protection status. The businesses occupying Hampi Bazaar have been given their marching orders and a new complex for the area's modern-day needs is under slow construction away from the monuments. **Global Heritage Fund** (www.globalheritagefund.org/where/hampi.html) have more details about Hampi's endangered monuments.

Orientation

Hampi Bazaar and the village of Kamalapuram to the south are the two main points of entry to the ruins. The KSTDC Hotel and the archaeological museum are in Kamalapuram. The main travellers' scene is Hampi Bazaar, a village crammed with budget lodges, shops and restaurants, all dominated by the Virupaksha Temple. The ruins themselves are divided into two main areas: the Sacred Centre, around Hampi Bazaar; and the Royal Centre, to the south around Kamalapuram. To the northeast across the Tungabhadra River is the village of Anegundi. Signposting in some parts of the site is inadequate, but you can't really get lost.

Information

Aspiration Stores (Map p922; ☎ 10am-1pm & 4-8pm)

For books on the area. Recommended is *Hampi* by John M Fritz and George Michell – a good architectural study.

Canara Bank (Map p922; ☎ 241243; ☎ 11am-2pm

Mon-Tue & Thu-Sat) Changes travellers cheques and gives cash advances on credit cards. The numerous authorised moneychangers around offer slightly worse rates.

Hampi Heritage Gallery (Map p922; ☎ 10am-2pm & 3-6pm) Sells books and offers half-day walking or cycling tours for Rs 200.

Sree Rama Cyber Café (Map p922; per hr Rs 50;

☎ 7am-11pm) Hampi is brimming with internet cafés – this is a good one. It also burns CDs of digital snaps for Rs 60.

Tourist Office (Map p922; ☎ 241339; ☎ 10am-5.30pm Sat-Thu) Can arrange guides for Rs 300/500 for a half-/full day.

Dangers & Annoyances

Hampi is a safe place, generally free of any aggression. That said, don't wander around the ruins after dark or alone, as muggings and violent attacks are not unknown.

Keep your wits about you with the auto-rickshaw drivers; some will overcharge outrageously for short trips around the village (you shouldn't have to pay more than Rs 10 for a ride from bus station to any of the lodges) and take commission from some of the lodge owners they recommend.

Sights & Activities

VIRUPAKSHA TEMPLE

The focal point of Hampi Bazaar is the **Virupaksha Temple** (Map p922; ☎ 2441241; admission Rs 2; ☎ dawn-dusk), one of the city's oldest structures. The main *gopuram*, almost 50m high, was built in 1442, with a smaller one added in 1510. The main shrine is dedicated to Virupaksha, a form of Shiva.

If Lakshmi (the temple elephant) and her attendant are around, you can get a smooch (blessing) from her for a Rs 1 coin. The adorable Lakshmi gets her morning bath at 7.30am, just down the way by the river ghats.

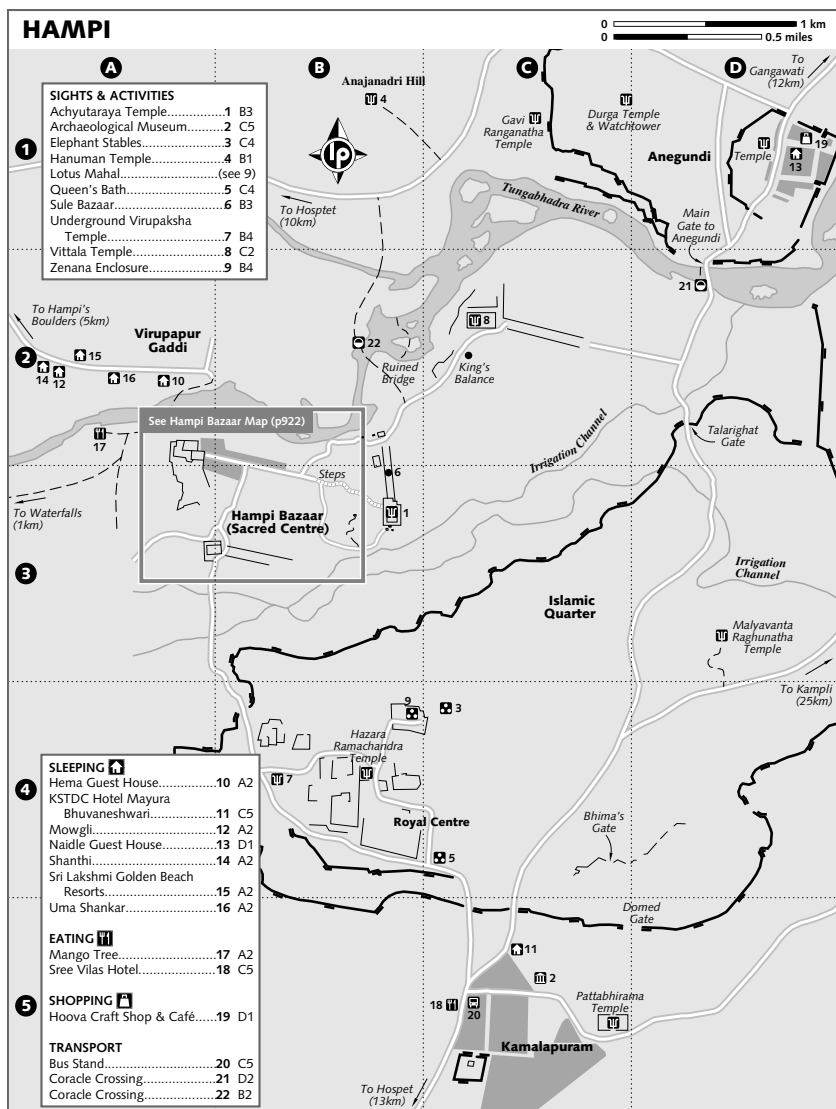
To the south, overlooking Virupaksha Temple, **Hemakuta Hill** (Map p922) has a scattering of early ruins, including Jain temples and a monolithic sculpture of Narasimha (Vishnu in his man-lion incarnation). It's worth the short walk up for the view over the bazaar.

At the east end of Hampi Bazaar is a monolithic **Nandi statue** (Map p922) and shrine. This is the main location for **Vijaya Utsav**, the Hampi arts festival held in November (see p882).

VITTALA TEMPLE

From the eastern end of Hampi Bazaar, a track, best covered on foot, leads left to the **Vittala Temple** (Map p921; Indian/foreigner Rs 10/US\$5; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm), about 2km away. The undisputed highlight of the Hampi ruins, the 16th-century temple is in a good state of preservation, though purists may gasp at the cement-block columns erected to keep the main structure from collapsing.

Work likely started on the temple during the reign of Krishnadevaraya (1509–29) and, despite the fact that it was never finished or



consecrated, the temple's incredible sculptural work is the pinnacle of Vijayanagar art. The outer 'musical' pillars reverberate when tapped, although this is discouraged to avoid further damage. There's an ornate stone chariot in the temple courtyard containing an image of Garuda. Its wheels were once capable of turning.

Keep your temple entry ticket for same-day admission into the Zenana Enclosure and Elephant Stables in the Royal Centre (see p922).

SULE BAZAAR & ACHYUTARAYA TEMPLE

Halfway along the path from Hampi Bazaar to the Vittala Temple, a track to the right leads

to deserted Sule Bazaar (Map p921), which gives you some idea of what Hampi Bazaar might have looked like if it hadn't been repopulated. At the southern end of this area is the Achyutaraya Temple (Map p921). Its isolated location at the foot of Matanga Hill makes it quietly atmospheric.

ROYAL CENTRE

This area of Hampi is quite different from the area around Hampi Bazaar, since most of the rounded boulders that once littered the site have been used to create beautiful stone walls. It's a 2km walk on a track from the Achyutaraya Temple, but most people get to it from the Hampi Bazaar–Kamalapuram road. This area is easily explored by bicycle since a decent dirt road runs through its heart.

Within various enclosures here are the rest of Hampi's major attractions, including the walled compound known as the **Zenana Enclosure** (Map p921; Indian/foreigner Rs 10/US\$5; ☎ 8.30am–5.30pm), and the **Elephant Stables** (Map p921; admission incl ticket to Zenana Enclosure; ☎ 8.30am–5.30pm). The former holds the **Lotus Mahal**, a delicately designed pavilion. It's an amazing synthesis of

Hindu and Islamic styles, and gets its name from the lotus bud carved in the centre of the domed and vaulted ceiling. The Elephant Stables is a grand building with domed chambers where the state elephants once resided. Your entry ticket to the Zenana Enclosure and the stables is also valid for same-day admission to the Vittala Temple (p920).

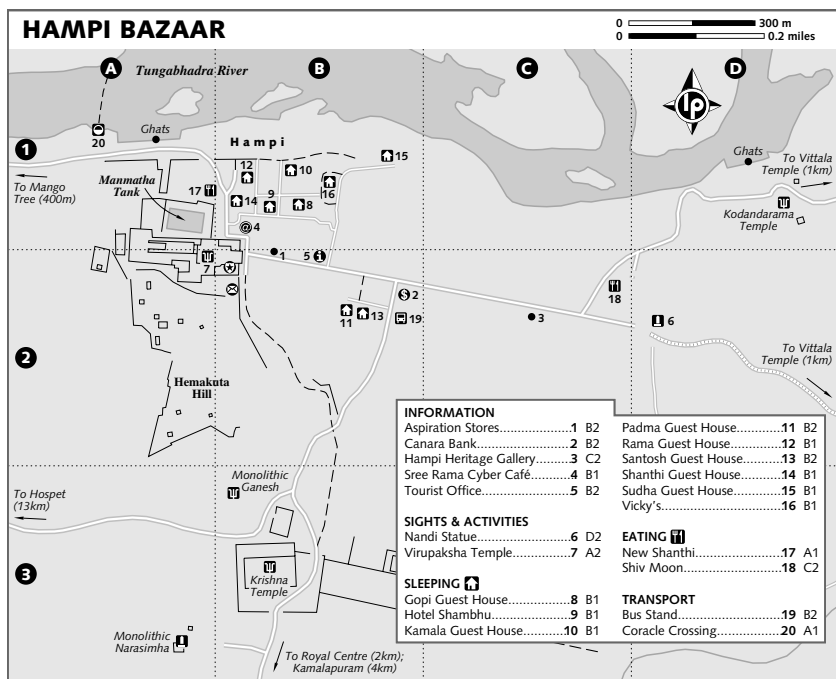
Further south, you'll find various temples and elaborate waterworks, including the **Underground Virupaksha Temple** (Map p921; ☎ 8.30am–5.30pm) and the **Queen's Bath** (Map p921; ☎ 8.30am–5.30pm), which is deceptively plain on the outside but quite lovely inside.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM

The **archaeological museum** (Map p921; ☎ 241561; Kamalapuram; admission Rs 5; ☎ 10am–5pm Sat–Thu) has well-displayed collections of sculptures from local ruins, Neolithic tools, 16th-century weaponry and a large floor model of the Vijayanagar ruins.

ANEGUNDI

North of the river is the ruined fortified stronghold of Anegundi (Map p921), an older



THE KISHKINDA TRUST

The **Kishkinda Trust** (TKT; ☎ 08533-267777; www.thekishkindatrust.org) runs programmes and builds business opportunities in Anegundi that benefit both the local community and help preserve the village's heritage and culture. The first project in 1997 created a cottage industry of crafts using locally produced cloth, banana fibres and river grasses. It now employs over 500 women and the attractive crafts are sold across India; you can view the range at the **Hoova Craft Shop & Café** (☎ 9.30am-5pm Mon-Sat, 10am-2.30pm Sun) in the village centre. Internet access and bicycle rental are also available here.

With international support, one of the village's traditional houses has been rehabilitated and turned into an interpretation centre. TKT's latest project is a series of homestays and guesthouses around the village; rates start at Rs 250 per person. The **Naidle Guesthouse** (d Rs 500) sleeps up to seven people. Meals (from Rs 30 to 150) are extra.

structure than those at Hampi; within it you'll find a charming village. Free of the rampant commercialism that blights Hampi Bazaar, this is a wonderful place to stay thanks to a heritage-conservation project (see the Kishkinda Trust, above).

Much of the old defensive wall is intact and there are numerous small temples worth a visit, including the whitewashed **Hanuman Temple** (Map p921; ☎ dawn-dusk), perched on top of the prominent Anjanadri Hill. Fittingly, lots of cheeky monkeys roam about, so don't walk up wearing bananas.

It takes less than an hour to walk to Anegundi from Hampi Bazaar. At the time of research a new bridge across the Tungabhadra River was nearing completion; until then coracle rides cost Rs 10. Alternatively there's a road to Anegundi from Hospet.

ROCK-CLIMBING

Some of the best low-altitude climbing in India can be had near Hampi. For more information, see p924.

Sleeping

There's little to choose between many of the quaint but basic rooms in Hampi Bazaar and Virupapur Gaddi. If you need AC and cable TV, stay in Hospet (p925), or if you're looking for something quieter then consider staying in Anegundi (see the Kishkinda Trust, above). The prices listed can shoot up by 50% or more during the manic fortnight around New Year's Day, and drop just as dramatically in the low season (from April to September).

HAMPI BAZAAR

All of the following places are shown on Map p922.

Shanthi Guest House (☎ 241568; s/d with shared bathroom Rs 100/150) An oldie but a goodie, Shanthi offers a peaceful courtyard, bicycle rental (Rs 40), a morning bakery delivery and a small shop that operates on an honour system.

Gopi Guest House (☎ 241695; kirangopi2002@yahoo.com; d Rs 200-400; ☎) The Gopi empire keeps on expanding – apart from the rooftop garden and restaurant, it has recently renovated a block across the road, which contains four pleasant en suite rooms. Management plans to offer free yoga lessons up on the roof.

Vicky's (☎ 241694; vikkyhampi@yahoo.co.in; r Rs 250; ☎) One of the village's larger operations, with 10 brightly painted rooms, a swing chair on the front porch, internet access and the requisite rooftop café.

Hotel Shambhu (☎ 241383; angadiparamesh1@hotmail.com; r Rs 300) Rooms painted in lavender, and a hallway with plants and an opalescent chandelier add a distinctive note to this pleasing place.

Padma Guest House (☎ 241331; s/d Rs 300/400) A range of good rooms are offered by the astute Padma, including some with lovely views of Virupaksha Temple.

Other good options:

Sudha Guest House (☎ 652752; d from Rs 250) Has a good family vibe, and some doubles fit three people.

Kamala Guest House (☎ 592662; ganeshashanker@yahoo.com; r Rs 300) New place with four well-presented rooms.

Rama Guest House (☎ 241962; d Rs 300) Has kept up good standards and added a few more rooms since we last checked.

Santosh Guest House (☎ 241460; hampisachin@yahoo.com; r Rs 350-500) Spotlessly clean; TV available in the most expensive room.

VIROPAPUR GADDI

Many travellers prefer the tranquil atmosphere of Virupapur Gaddi, immediately across the river from Hampi Bazaar. A small boat (Rs 10) shuttles frequently across the river from 7am, although out of high season the last one leaves at 6pm. When the river is running high during the monsoon, boats may not be able to cross.

Shanthi (Map p921; ☎ 325352; r with shared bathroom Rs 100, bungalows with private bathroom from Rs 250) Shanthi's bungalows have ricefield, river and sunset views, and front porches with couch swings. The restaurant does good thalis (Rs 45) and pizzas (Rs 70 to 85).

Mowgli (Map p921; ☎ 9448217588; mowgli96@hotmail.com; r with shared bathroom Rs 100, bungalows with private bathroom from Rs 250; 🍷) With prime views across the rice fields, shady gardens sheltering hammocks, and thatched-roof bungalows, this is a top-class chill-out spot.

Hema Guest House (Map p921; ☎ 9449103008; dm/ bungalows Rs 100/300) Justifiably one of Virupapur Gaddi's more popular spots, the Hema offers a friendly welcome, simple accommodation and a relaxing restaurant in a beautiful wooden belvedere.

Uma Shankar (Map p921; ☎ 08533-287067; vijaygharti@hotmail.com; r from Rs 200) Swing seats under a shady porch front the neat rooms at this laid-back place set amid pretty gardens.

Sri Lakshmi Golden Beach Resorts (Map p921; ☎ 08533-287008; d Rs 150-1500; 🍷 🍷) With a traditional resort feel, this place has a wide range of rooms, some in circular cottages with circular beds. At the time of research the large pool was out of commission; once it's up and running nonguests can use it for Rs 50 per hour.

Hampi's Boulders (☎ 08539-265939, 9448034202; Narayanpet; s/d incl full board from Rs 4000/6000; 🍷 🍷) To really get away from it all, head for this very discreet, small-scale wilderness resort, 5km west of Virupapur Gaddi. Inventively designed cottages blend almost seamlessly into the landscape, and the food is excellent.

KAMALAPURAM

KSTDC Hotel Mayura Bhuvaneshwari (Map p921; ☎ 08394-241574; d/tr from Rs 400/500; 🍷) This soulless, government-run place is really only worth it if you can't live without AC (and these rooms kick off at Rs 900). One slender point in its favour is its bar – the only legal one close to Hampi.

Eating

With one exception, Hampi is not renowned for its restaurants. Due to Hampi's religious significance, meat is scarce (if you want a chicken dish, for example, you generally have to order it a day in advance) and alcohol is banned – though travellers have been known to (discreetly) bend the rules. Places are open from 7am to 10pm.

ourpick Mango Tree (Map p921; mains Rs 25-70) No visit to Hampi is complete until you've spent a lazy few hours at the Mango Tree. The walk out here through a banana plantation is delicious, the thalis (Rs 45) are a treat, and it does dosas for breakfast and dinner. Hop on the swing that hangs from the eponymous mango tree or lie back on the terraced seating with a book for the afternoon.

Shiv Moon (Map p922; mains Rs 35-90) This friendly place with pleasant views across the river is

CLIMBING IN KARNATAKA

Magnificent bluffs and rounded boulders poke up all over Karnataka, offering some of India's best rock-climbing. However, bolting is limited, so you'll need to bring a decent bouldering mat and plenty of gear from home – see p95.

Hampi is the undisputed bouldering capital of India. The entire landscape is made of granite crags and boulders, some bearing the marks of ancient stonemasons. Also interesting is nearby **Badami** (p926), a perfect horseshoe of red sandstone cliffs containing rock-carved temples and some magnificent bolted and traditional routes looking out over an ancient medieval city.

About 40km from Bengaluru, accessible by bus on the Mysore road, is **Ramnagar**, a cluster of towering granite boulders with some of the most popular routes in Karnataka. Other top spots include the granite massif at **Savandurga**, 50km west of Bengaluru near Magadi, and the boulder field at **Turalli**, 12km south of Bengaluru towards Kanakapura, both accessible by bus or taxi from Bengaluru.

Routes and grades are only just being assigned, so this is old-fashioned adventure climbing. **Dreamroutes** (www.dreamroutes.org/etc/allclimbs.html) has more tips on climbing in Karnataka.

away from the hubbub of Hampi Bazaar. It gets good reviews for its ambience and the quality of its food, which includes thalis (Rs 35) and quiche (Rs 90).

Waterfalls (Map p921; mains Rs 50) Around a 2km walk west of Hampi Bazaar, this simple, appealing operation is tucked away beside shady banana plantations on the path towards some interesting rock pools and small waterfalls.

New Shanthi (Map p922; mains Rs 20-45) A hippy vibe hangs over this popular option with an impressive selection of juices, lassis (yogurt and ice-water drinks) and shakes, as well as a good bakery.

Several of Hampi's lodges sport rooftop restaurants; good ones include those at Gopi Guest House (p923), Vicky's (p923) and Rama Guest House (p923). Kamalapuram has a few simple eateries, such as **Sree Vilas Hotel** (Map p921; meals Rs 20; ☎ 5am-8.30pm), opposite the bus stand.

Getting There & Away

While some buses from Goa and Bengaluru will drop you at the bus stand in Hampi Bazaar, you have to go to Hospet to catch most buses out. The first bus from Hospet (Rs 10, 30 minutes, half-hourly) is at 6.30am; the last one back leaves Hampi Bazaar at 8.30pm. An autorickshaw costs Rs 80. See right for transport information for Hospet.

KSRTC has a daily Rajahamsa bus service between Hampi Bazaar and Bengaluru (Rs 280, nine hours) leaving at 8pm. The overnight sleeper bus to/from Goa (Rs 500), which runs November to March, is a popular option – but don't expect a deep sleep. Numerous travel agents in Hampi Bazaar are eager to book onward bus, train and plane tickets, or arrange a car and driver.

Getting Around

Once you've seen the Vittala and Achyutarayana Temples, and Sule Bazaar, exploring the rest of the ruins by bicycle is the thing to do. There are key monuments haphazardly signposted along the road from Hampi Bazaar to Kamalapuram. Bicycles cost Rs 30 to 40 per day in Hampi Bazaar; mopeds can be hired for around Rs 200, plus petrol. You can take your bicycle or motorbike (extra Rs 10) across the river on the boat.

Walking is the only way to see all the nooks and crannies, but expect to cover at least 7km just to see the major ruins. Autorickshaws and taxis are available for sightseeing, and

will drop you as close to each of the major ruins as they can. A five-hour autorickshaw tour costs Rs 300.

Organised tours depart from Hospet; see below for details.

HOSPET

☎ 08394 / pop 163,284

This busy regional centre is the transport hub for Hampi. There's no reason to linger unless you desire an air-conditioned hotel room and cable TV.

Information

Internet joints are common, with connections costing Rs 40 per hour. The bus-stand cloakroom holds bags for Rs 10 per day.

KSTDC tourist office (☎ 228537; Shanbhag Circle;

☎ 7.30am-8.30pm) Offers a Hampi tour (Rs 140), which

runs daily October to March and on demand the rest of the year; it departs from the tourist office at 9.30am and returns at 5.30pm. The quality of guides varies enormously. Call ahead as tours won't run with fewer than 10 people.

State Bank of India (☎ 228576; Station Rd;

☎ 10.30am-4pm Mon-Sat) Changes currency; also has a 24-hour ATM that accepts Visa and MasterCard.

Sleeping & Eating

Hotel Malligi (☎ 228101; www.malligihotels.com; Jabunatha Rd; r from Rs 300-3000; ☎ ☎ ☎) This is only worth it if you opt for the more expensive AC rooms, some of which are decorated in a vaguely contemporary style. Amenities including a couple of decent restaurants, a pool (Rs 35 for nonguests and guests in the cheapest rooms; closed Monday), a gym and Ayurvedic masseurs.

Hotel Priyadarshini (☎ 228838; www.priyainnhampi.com; Station Rd; s/d from Rs 900/950; ☎ ☎) Handily located between the bus and train stations, all the fresh, tidy rooms here have balconies and come with TV. Its outdoor nonveg restaurant-bar Manasa (mains Rs 60 to 110) has a good menu, and is shaded by trees with a lovely view of the fields.

Udupi Sri Krishna Bhavan (meals Rs 15-45; ☎ 6am-11pm) Opposite the bus stand, this clean, non-nonsense spot dishes out North and South Indian fare, including thalis for Rs 23.

Getting There & Away

BUS

The chaotic **bus stand** (☎ 228802) has services to Hampi from Bay 10 every half-hour (Rs 7 to 10, 30 minutes). Several express buses run to

Bengaluru (ordinary/deluxe Rs 175/300, nine hours) in morning and evening batches, and three overnight buses head to Panaji (Panjim; Rs 180, 11 hours) via Margao. Two buses a day go to Badami (Rs 150, six hours), or you can catch one of the many buses to Gadag (Rs 52, 2½ hours) and transfer. There are frequent buses to Hubli (Rs 82, 4½ hours) and Bijapur (Rs 130, six hours), three overnight services to Hyderabad (deluxe Rs 300, 10 hours) and one direct bus, at 9am, to Gokarna (Rs 200, 10 hours). For Mangalore or Hassan, take one of the many morning buses to Shimoga (Rs 160, five hours) and change there.

TRAIN

Hospet's **train station** (☎ 228360) is a 20-minute walk or Rs 10 autorickshaw ride from the centre of town. The daily *Hampi Express* heads to Hubli at 7.45am (2nd class Rs 46, 3½ hours) and Bengaluru at 8pm (sleeper/2AC Rs 212/881, 10 hours), or you can go to Guntakal (Rs 42, 2½ hours) and catch a Bengaluru-bound express there. Every Tuesday, Friday and Saturday, an 8.45am express heads to Vasco da Gama (sleeper/2AC Rs 169/690, 9½ hours).

To get to Badami, catch a Hubli train to Gadag and change there.

HUBLI

☎ 0836 / pop 786,018

The busy, prosperous city of Hubli is a hub for rail routes from Mumbai to Bengaluru, Goa and northern Karnataka. Several hotels and restaurants sit close to the train station; others surround the old bus stand, a 15-minute walk from the train station. Long-distance buses usually stop here before heading to the new bus stand 2km away, where there are few amenities.

Information

Ing Vysya Bank, next to Sagar Palace, has an ATM, and there's an iWay internet café across the road from the Hotel Ajanta.

Sleeping & Eating

Hotel Ajanta (☎ 2362216; Jayachamaraj Nagar; s/d from Rs 120/175) This large and well-run place near the train station has a good range of basic, functional rooms. The vibe is pre-Independence and its ground-floor restaurant (mains around Rs 50) is packed at lunch.

Hotel Samrat Ashok (☎ 2362380; Lamington Rd; s/d from Rs 350/400; 🍷) Above a bookshop on Lam-

ington Rd, this is handy for both the train station and old bus stand. Not to be confused with the Hotel Ashok on the corner.

Sagar Palace (Jayachamaraj Nagar; mains Rs 30-70; 🍷 11am-3.30pm & 7-11.30pm) A classy pure-veg restaurant and bar serving up good food, including rum-spiked ice-cream sundaes.

Getting There & Away

BUS

Long-distance buses depart from the **new bus stand** (☎ 2221085). There are numerous services to Bengaluru (deluxe Rs 220, 10 hours), Hospet (Rs 85, four hours) and Mangalore (Rs 200, 10 hours). Buses also head to Mumbai (Rs 350, 14 hours, 10 daily), Mysore (ordinary/deluxe Rs 240/480, 12 hours, eight daily), Bijapur (Rs 92, six hours, six daily), Gokarna (Rs 200, five hours, four daily) and Panaji (Rs 103, six hours, six daily), as well as Vasco da Gama and Margao.

Private deluxe buses to Bengaluru (Rs 326) run from opposite the **old bus stand** (Lamington Rd), 2km away.

TRAIN

From the train station, which has a **reservation office** (☎ 2354333; 🍷 8am-8pm), three expresses head to Hospet (Rs 47, 3½ hours). Around five expresses run daily to Bengaluru (sleeper/2AC Rs 216/777, eight hours), but there's only one direct train to Mumbai (sleeper/2AC Rs 289/1223, 17 hours). Trains run on Tuesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday to Vasco de Gama (via Margao; sleeper/2AC Rs 143/542, seven hours).

NORTHERN KARNATAKA

BADAMI

☎ 08357 / pop 25,851

Looking at the scuffy village today, it's difficult to believe that Badami was once the capital of the Chalukya empire, which covered much of the central Deccan between the 4th and 8th centuries AD. However, climb up into the red sandstone ridge and explore the magnificent rock-cut cave temples surrounding the village, and you'll find ample evidence of Badami's former status.

Nearby Aihole hosted the earliest Chalukya capital; later the site was moved to Badami, with a secondary capital in Pattadakal. The result of this relocation is that the whole area

around Badami is liberally scattered with ancient temples. Badami is the best base for taking in all these sites; a day or two should cover it.

History

Badami was the Chalukyan capital from about AD 540 to 757. At its height the empire was enormous, stretching from Kanchipuram in Tamil Nadu to the Narmada River in Gujarat. The surrounding hills are dotted with temples, fortifications, carvings and inscriptions dating not just from the Chalukyan period, but also from other times when the site was occupied as a fortress. After Badami fell to the Rashtrakutas, it was occupied successively by the Chalukyas of Kalyan (a separate branch of the Western Chalukyas), the Kalachuryas, the Yadavas of Devagiri, the Vijayanagar empire, the Adil Shahi kings of Bijapur and the Marathas.

The sculptural legacy left by the Chalukya artisans includes some of the earliest and finest examples of Dravidian temples and rock-cut caves, as well as the earliest free-standing temple in India. Aihole was a sort of trial ground for new temple architecture, which was further developed at Pattadakal, now a World Heritage site. The forms and sculptural work at these sites inspired the later South Indian Hindu empires that rose and fell before the arrival of the Muslims.

Orientation & Information

Station Rd, Badami's busy main street, has several hotels and restaurants; the more tranquil Badami village is between this road and the hilltop caves. The **tourist office** (☎ 220414; Ramdurg Rd; ☹ 10am-5.30pm), in the KSTDC Hotel Mayura Chalukya, is next to useless.

Mookambika Deluxe hotel changes currency for guests, but at a lousy rate; bring enough cash with you.

Internet (Ramdurg Rd; per hr Rs 60; ☹ 7am-10pm) is available in a house at the back of the KSTDC Hotel Mayura Chalukya compound. You can also try **Hotel Rajsangam** (Station Rd; per hr Rs 100) in the town centre.

Sights

CAVES

Badami's highlight is its beautiful **cave temples** (Indian/foreigner Rs 5/US\$2; ☹ dawn-dusk). Nonpushy guides ask Rs 200 for a tour of the caves, or Rs 300 for the whole site.

Cave One

This cave, just above the entrance to the complex, is dedicated to Shiva. It's the oldest of the four caves, probably carved in the latter half of the 6th century. On the cliff wall to the right of the porch is a captivating image of Nataraja striking 81 dance poses (one for every combination of his 18 arms). He holds, among other things, a snake, a musical instrument and a *trishula* (trident).

On the right of the porch area is a huge figure of Ardhanarishvara. The right half of the figure shows features of Shiva, such as matted hair and a third eye, while the left half of the image has aspects of Parvati. On the opposite wall is a large image of Harihara; the right half represents Shiva and the left half Vishnu.

Cave Two

Dedicated to Vishnu, this cave is simpler in design. As with Caves One and Three, the front edge of the platform is decorated with images of pot-bellied dwarfs in various poses. Four pillars support the veranda, and the top of each pillar is carved with a bracket in the shape of a *yali* (mythical lion creature). On the left wall of the porch is the bull-headed figure of Varaha, an incarnation of Vishnu and the emblem of the Chalukya empire. To his left is Naga, a snake with a human face. On the right wall is a large sculpture of Trivikrama, another incarnation of Vishnu, booting out a demon while he holds various weapons in his eight hands. The ceiling panels contain images of Vishnu riding Garuda, *gandharva* (demigod) couples, swastikas and 16 fish arranged in a wheel (yet another incarnation of Vishnu).

Between the second and third caves are two sets of steps to the right. The first leads to a **natural cave**. The eastern wall of this cave contains a small image of Padmapani (an incarnation of the Buddha). The second set of steps – sadly, barred by a gate – leads to the hilltop **South Fort**.

Cave Three

This cave, carved in AD 578 under the orders of Mangalesha, the brother of King Kirtivarma, contains some sculptural highlights.

On the left-hand wall is a large carving of Vishnu, to whom the cave is dedicated, sitting on the coils of the snake. Nearby is an image of Varaha with four hands. The pillars have carved brackets in the shape of *yalis* and the sides of the pillars are also carved. The ceiling

panels contain images, including Indra riding an elephant, Shiva on a bull and Brahma on a swan.

Cave Four

Dedicated to Jainism, Cave Four is the smallest of the set and was carved between the 7th and 8th centuries. The pillars, with their roaring *yalis*, are of a similar design to the other caves. The right wall of the cave has an image of Suparshvanatha (the seventh Jain *tirthankar*) surrounded by 24 Jain *tirthankars*. The sanctum contains an image of Adinath, the first Jain *tirthankar*.

OTHER SIGHTS

The caves overlook the 5th-century **Agastyatirtha Tank** and the waterside **Bhutanatha temples** (admission free). On the other side of the tank is an **archaeological museum** (☎ 220157; admission Rs 2; 🕒 10am-5pm Sat-Thu), which houses superb examples of local sculpture, including a remarkably explicit Lajja-Gauri image of a fertility cult that flourished in the area. The stairway just behind the museum climbs through a dramatic sandstone chasm and fortified gateways

to reach the various temples and ruins of the **north fort** (admission free). The fort has expansive views and overlooks the rooftops of Badami.

It's worth exploring Badami's **laneways**, where you'll find old houses with brightly painted carved wooden doorways, the occasional Chalukyan ruin and, of course, flocks of curious children.

Activities

Badami offers some great low-altitude climbing. For more information, see p924.

Sleeping

Many of Badami's hotels offer discounts in the low season.

Mookambika Deluxe (☎ 220067; fax 220106; Station Rd; s/d from Rs 150/300; 🕒) The helpful staff at Badami's de facto tourist office can arrange taxis and guides. There's a range of rooms, including pricier ones with AC, but all suffer from street noise.

Hotel New Satkar (☎ 220417; Station Rd; s/d from Rs 275/450; 🕒) Rooms at this friendly budget place are painted in beiges and creams; the best are on the 1st floor.

KARNATAKA

BADAMI

0 200 m
0 0.1 miles

<p>INFORMATION</p> <p>Hotel Rajsangam..... (see 14)</p> <p>Internet..... (see 15)</p> <p>Post Office..... 1 B2</p> <p>Tourist Office..... (see 15)</p> <p>SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES</p> <p>Archaeological Museum..... 2 C1</p> <p>Bhutanatha Temple..... 3 D1</p> <p>Bhutanatha Temple..... 4 D1</p> <p>Cave Four..... 5 D2</p> <p>Cave One..... 6 C2</p>	<p>Cave Three..... 7 D2</p> <p>Cave Two..... 8 C2</p> <p>Natural Cave..... 9 D1</p> <p>Natural Cave..... 10 D2</p> <p>North Fort..... 11 C1</p> <p>South Fort..... 12 D2</p> <p>SLEEPING 🛏</p> <p>Hotel New Satkar..... 13 B1</p> <p>Hotel Rajsangam..... 14 B1</p> <p>KSTDC Hotel Mayura Chalukya..... 15 A2</p> <p>Mookambika Deluxe..... 16 B1</p>	<p>EATING 🍴</p> <p>Banashree..... (see 14)</p> <p>Geeta Darshini..... 17 B2</p> <p>Hotel Sanman..... 18 B1</p> <p>Sri Ganesh Prasad..... 19 B1</p> <p>TRANSPORT</p> <p>Bicycle Hire..... 20 B2</p> <p>Bus Stand..... 21 B1</p> <p>Taxi Stand..... (see 1)</p>
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KSTDC Hotel Mayura Chalukya (☎ 220046; Ramdurg Rd; d/tr Rs 400/550; 🏠) The rooms are large and reasonably pleasant at this government-run place in a quiet compound away from the perpetual bustle of the town centre.

Hotel Rajsangam (☎ 221991; www.hotelrajsangam.com; Station Rd; d from Rs 800; 🏠 🍷 🍷) This mid-range place with good rooms (the best are the deluxe ones at the back where it's a bit quieter) is a useful addition to Badami's hotel scene. There's also a plunge pool on the roof for a cooling dip with a brilliant view.

Hotel Badami Court (☎ 220230; rafiqmht@blr.vsnl.net.in; Station Rd; s/d incl breakfast from Rs 1975/2500; 🏠 🍷) As good as it gets for Badami, this pleasant place sits in pastoral countryside 2km from the noisy town centre. Rooms are more functional than plush. Nonguests can use the pool for Rs 100.

Eating

Geeta Darshini (Station Rd; snacks Rs 6-10; 🕒 6.30am-9pm) The *idlis* and *masala dosas* come out thick and fast at this popular town-centre joint, and they're all washed down with tiny cups of chai. Perfect for a snack or quick meal.

Sri Ganesh Prasad (Station Rd; meals Rs 15; 🕒 5.30am-10.30pm) Beneath the Hotel Anand Deluxe, this is a cheap and cheery standby for excellent South Indian thalis (Rs 17) and *masala dosas* (Rs 10).

Hotel Sanman (Station Rd; mains Rs 30-50; 🕒 10am-11.30pm) If you need a cold beer with your meal, this is the place to get it. Tables behind curtained booths make it an intimate affair.

Banashree (Station Rd; mains Rs 40-60; 🕒 7am-10.30pm) In front of the Hotel Rajsangam, this bright and welcoming pure-veg restaurant offers everything from a variety of dosas to quasi-Chinese dishes. A better bet than the hotel's nonveg restaurant at the rear, which is more of a smoky bar.

Pulikeshi Dining Room (mains Rs 55-125; 🕒 24hr) People rave about the good range of continental and Indian dishes at this silver-service restaurant in Hotel Badami Court.

Getting There & Away

Buses shuffle off from Badami to Bijapur (Rs 69, 3½ hours, seven daily), Hubli (Rs 54, three hours, seven daily) and Bengaluru (ordinary/deluxe Rs 260/387, 12 hours, five daily). Three buses go direct to Hospet (Rs 84, six hours), or you can catch any of the buses to Gadag (Rs 30, two hours) and go from there. Note that this route is particularly hard on the bum.

Trains only run to Gadag (Rs 15, two hours, three daily), where you can get a connecting train to Hospet or Hubli. They're all 2nd-class passenger trains – but they're still more comfortable than the buses.

Getting Around

Badami's **train station** (☎ 220040) is 5km from town. Tongas (Rs 30), taxis (Rs 55), autorickshaws (Rs 30), and shared vans or large autorickshaws (Rs 4) ply the route. You can hire bicycles in Badami for Rs 5 per hour.

Exploring the surrounding area by local bus is easy, since they're moderately frequent and usually run on time. You can visit both Aihole and Pattadakal in a day from Badami if you get moving early; it's best to start with the morning bus to Aihole (Rs 15, one hour). Frequent buses then run between Aihole and Pattadakal (Rs 8, 30 minutes), and from Pattadakal to Badami (Rs 8, one hour). The last bus from Pattadakal to Badami is at 8pm. Take food and water with you.

Taxis cost at least Rs 650 for a day trip to Pattadakal, Aihole and Mahakuta. Badami's hotels can arrange taxis; alternatively, go to the taxi stand in front of the post office.

AROUND BADAMI Pattadakal

This riverside village 20km from Badami was the second capital of the Badami Chalukyas; most of its **temples** (☎ 08357-243118; Indian/foreigner Rs 10/US\$5; 🕒 6am-6pm) were built during the 7th and 8th centuries AD, but the earliest remains date from the 3rd and 4th centuries AD and the latest structure, a Jain temple, dates from the Rashtrakuta period (9th century). The group of temples is a World Heritage site.

Pattadakal, like Aihole, was a significant site in the development of South Indian temple architecture. In particular, two main types of temple towers were tried out here: curvilinear towers top the Kadasiddeshwara, Jambulinga and Galaganatha temples; and square roofs and receding tiers are used in the Mallikarjuna, Sangameshwara and Virupaksha temples.

The main **Virupaksha Temple** is a huge structure. The massive columns are covered with intricate carvings depicting episodes from the Ramayana and Mahabharata; they show battle scenes, lovers and decorative motifs. Around the roof of the inner hall are sculptures of elephants' and lions' heads. To the east, and

facing the temple, is a pavilion containing a massive Nandi. The **Mallikarjuna Temple**, next to the Virupaksha Temple, is almost identical in design but slightly more worn. About 500m south of the main enclosure is the Jain **Papanatha Temple**, with its entrance flanked by elephant sculptures.

See p929 for transport details to/from Badami and Aihole.

Aihole

The Chalukyan regional capital between the 4th and 6th centuries, Aihole (*ay-ho-leh*) teems with at least 100 temples, although many are in ruins and engulfed by the modern village. Here you can see Hindu architecture in its embryonic stage, from the earliest simple shrines, such as those in the Kontigudi Group and the most ancient Lad Khan Temple, to the later and more complex buildings, such as the Meguti Temple.

The most impressive building in Aihole is the **Durga Temple** (☎ 08351-284533; Indian/foreigner Rs 5/US\$2; 🕒 8am-6pm), which dates from the 7th century. It's notable for its semicircular apse, which was copied from Buddhist architecture, and for the remains of the curvilinear *sikhara* (Hindu temple spire). Intricate carvings adorn the colonnaded passageway around the sanctuary. The small **museum** (admission Rs 2; 🕒 10am-5pm Sat-Thu) behind the Durga Temple contains further examples of the Chalukyan sculptors' work.

To the south of the Durga Temple are several other collections of buildings, including some of the earliest structures in Aihole – the Gandar, Ladkhan, Kontigudi and Hucchapaya groups, which are of the pavilion type, with slightly sloping roofs. About 600m to the southeast, up a series of steps on a low hilltop, is the Jain **Meguti Temple**. Watch out for snakes!

The unappealing **KSTDC Tourist Home** (☎ 08351-284541; Amingad Rd; d/tr Rs 200/300), 1km from the village centre, is the only accommodation in town. You're better off staying in Badami.

See p929 for transport information.

BIJAPUR

☎ 08352 / pop 245,946 / elev 593m

Ruins and still-intact gems of 15th- to 17th-century Islamic architecture embellish old, dusty Bijapur like so many tatters of faded sultans' finery. It's a fascinating place to explore, blessed by a wealth of mosques, mausoleums,

palaces and fortifications, whose austere grace is in complete contrast to the sculptural extravagance of the Chalukyan and Hoysala temples further south.

Bijapur was the capital of the Adil Shahi kings from 1489 to 1686, and was one of the splinter states formed when the Bahmani Muslim kingdom broke up in 1482. The town has a strong Islamic character but is also a centre for the Lingayat brand of Shaivism, which emphasises a single personalised god. The **Lingayat Siddeshwara Festival** runs for eight days in January/February.

Orientation

The two main attractions, the Golgumbaz and the Ibrahim Rouza, are at opposite ends of the town. Between them runs Station Rd (also known as Mahatma Gandhi Rd, or MG Rd), along which you'll find most of the major hotels and restaurants. The bus stand is a five-minute walk from Station Rd; the train station is 2km east of the centre.

Information

Canara Bank (☎ 250163; Azad Rd; 🕒 10.30am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-1pm Sat) Changes travellers cheques; bring a photocopy of your passport and prepare to wait forever.

Cyber Park (MG Rd; per hr Rs 30; 🕒 9am-10.30pm) Internet access.

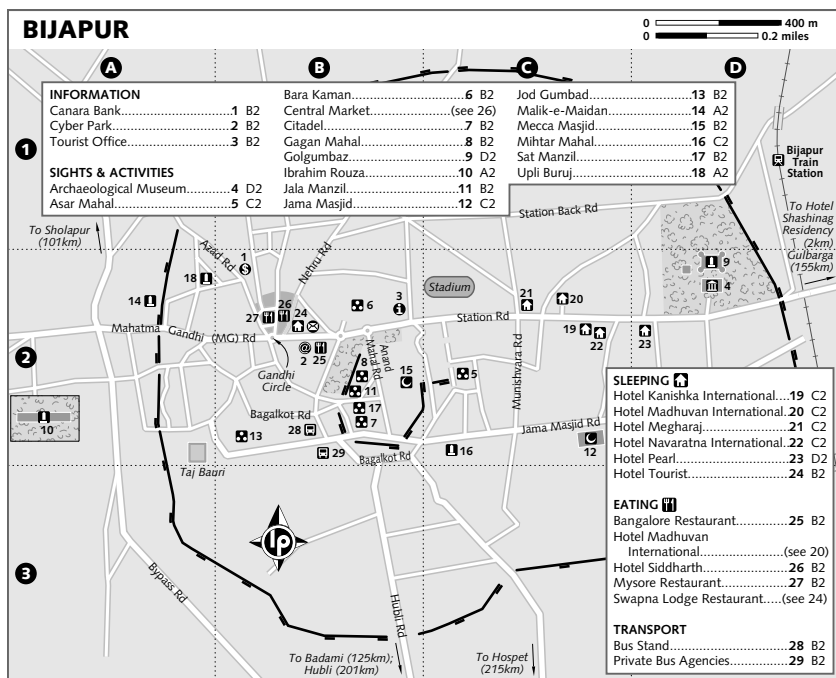
Tourist office (☎ 250359; Station Rd; 🕒 10am-5.30pm Mon-Sat) Not much on offer. It's behind KSTDC Hotel Mayura Adil Shahi Annexe.

Sights

GOLGUMBAZ

Set in tranquil gardens, the ill-proportioned but magnificent **Golgumbaz** (☎ 240737; Indian/foreigner Rs 5/US\$2; 🕒 6am-5.40pm) is Bijapur's largest monument – both in size and reputation. Dating from 1659, the building is the mausoleum of Mohammed Adil Shah (1626–56), his two wives, his mistress (Rambha), one of his daughters and a grandson. Their caskets stand on a raised platform in the centre of the immense hall, though their actual graves are in the crypt, accessible by a flight of steps under the western doorway.

Octagonal seven-storey towers stand at each of corner of the hall, which is capped by an enormous dome, 38m in diameter; it's said to be the largest dome in the world after St Peter's Basilica in Rome. Climb the steep, narrow stairs up one of the towers to reach



the 'whispering gallery'; the acoustics are such that if you whisper into the wall a person on the opposite side of the gallery can hear you clearly, and any sound made is said to be repeated 10 times over. Unfortunately people like to test this out with their shouting, so come in the early morning before any school groups arrive.

The gardens house a missable **archaeological museum** (admission Rs 2; ☎ 10am-5pm Sat-Thu).

IBRAHIM ROUZA

The beautiful **Ibrahim Rouza** (Indian/foreigner Rs 5/US\$2, video Rs 25; ☎ 6am-6pm) is considered to be one of the most finely proportioned Islamic monuments in India. It was built at the height of Bijapur's prosperity by Ibrahim Adil Shah II (r 1580-1626) for his queen, Taj Sultana. As it happens, he died before her, so he was laid to rest here as well. Unlike the Golgumbaz, which is impressive for its immensity, the emphasis here is on elegance and detail. Its 24m-high minarets are said to have inspired those of the Taj Mahal. It's also one of the few monuments in Bijapur with substantial stone filigree and other decorative sculptural work.

Interred here with Ibrahim Adil Shah and his queen are his daughter, his two sons, and his mother, Haji Badi Sahiba.

CITADEL

Surrounded by fortified walls and a wide moat, the citadel once contained the palaces, pleasure gardens and durbar (royal court) of the Adil Shahi kings. Now mainly in ruins, the most impressive of the remaining fragments is the **Gagan Mahal**, built by Ali Adil Shah I around 1561 as a dual-purpose royal residency and durbar hall.

The ruins of Mohammed Adil Shah's seven-storey palace, the **Sat Manzil**, are nearby. Across the road stands the delicate **Jala Manzil**, once a water pavilion surrounded by secluded courts and gardens. On the other side of Station Rd are the graceful arches of **Bara Kaman**, the ruined mausoleum of Ali Roza.

JAMA MASJID

The finely proportioned **Jama Masjid** (Jama Masjid Rd; ☎ 9am-5.30pm) has graceful arches, a fine dome and a vast inner courtyard with room for 2250 worshippers. Spaces for the

worshippers are marked out in black on the mosque's floor. Jama Masjid was constructed by Ali Adil Shah I (r 1557–80), who was also responsible for erecting the fortified city walls and the Gagan Mahal.

OTHER SIGHTS

On the eastern side of the citadel is the tiny, walled **Mecca Masjid** (admission free), thought to have been built in the early 17th century. Some speculate that this mosque, with its high surrounding walls and cloistered feel, may have been for women. Further east, the **Asar Mahal** (admission free), built by Mohammed Adil Shah in about 1646 to serve as a Hall of Justice, once housed two hairs from the Prophet's beard. The rooms on the upper storey are decorated with frescoes and a square tank graces the front. A sign states that it's out of bounds for women. The stained but richly decorated **Mihtar Mahal** (admission free) to the south serves as an ornamental gateway to a small mosque.

Upli Buruj (admission free) is a 16th-century, 24m-high watchtower near the western walls of the city. An external flight of stairs leads to the top, where there are a couple of hefty cannons and good views. A short walk west brings you to the **Malik-e-Maidan** (Monarch of the Plains), a huge cannon over 4m long, almost 1.5m in diameter and estimated to weigh 55 tonnes. Cast in 1549, it was brought to Bijapur as a war trophy thanks to the effort of 10 elephants, 400 oxen and hundreds of men. Legend has it that the gunners would jump into the moat after lighting the fuse rather than be deafened. The mouth of the cannon is shaped like a lion (representing Islam), and its razor-sharp jaws are closing on a cartoonish bug-eyed elephant (Hinduism) that's trying to flee.

In the southwest of the city, off Bagalkot Rd, stand the twin **Jod Gumbad** tombs with handsome bulbous domes; an Adil Shahi general and his spiritual adviser, Abdul Razzaq Qadiri, are buried here. The surrounding gardens are a popular picnic spot.

Bijapur's **central market**, just north of MG Rd, is also worth exploring; it's packed with spice merchants, flower sellers, tailors and other traders.

Sleeping

Hotel Tourist (☎ 250655; MG Rd; s/d from Rs 80/150, deluxe Rs 150/250) The very ordinary doubles here

are acceptable; a better option is the clean, freshly painted deluxe rooms.

Hotel Megharaj (☎ 254458; Station Rd; r from Rs 150; 🚿) The Megharaj continues to make an effort to keep things nice, and it's a little out of the downtown jungle.

Hotel Navaratna International (☎ 222771; fax 222772; Station Rd; r from Rs 400; 🚿) Colourful paintings in the style of Kandinsky and Chagal are a pleasant surprise in the lobby of the Navaratna. The sparkling clean rooms with big shiny floor tiles are also very welcome.

Hotel Kanishka International (☎ 223788; www.kanishka_bijapur.com; Station Rd; d from Rs 450; 🚿) The spacious rooms here have big comfy beds and marble floors, and there's a small gym for guests' use. Rates include tax.

Hotel Pearl (☎ 256002; fax 243606; Station Rd; d from Rs 500; 🚿) Across the road from the Golgumbaz, this business hotel has some class with its central atrium and brightly painted rooms. Ask for one at the rear to avoid street noise.

Hotel Madhuvan International (☎ 255571; fax 256201; Station Rd; r from Rs 950; 🚿) Although it's clearly on the slide, this is still one of the nicer places in town – it's just overpriced. A major plus that it's set well enough away from Station Rd to be quiet. The restaurant (below) is excellent.

Hotel Shashinag Residency (☎ 260344; www.hotelshashinag.com; Solapur-Chitradurga Bypass Rd; s/d incl breakfast from US\$30/45; 🚿 📺 🚿) The rooms are large but the housekeeping standards need improvement at what is supposed to be Bijapur's most upmarket choice. Bonuses are a small pool (Rs 30 per hour for nonguests), a playground and a gym. Rates include taxes.

Eating

Unless otherwise mentioned, all places are open from around 6pm to 10pm.

Bangalore Restaurant (MG Rd; meals Rs 18) This modest little pink-painted place does good South Indian veg thalis.

Mysore Restaurant (New Market; meals Rs 20) Locals swear by this place for good-value South Indian veg dishes.

Hotel Madhuvan International (mains Rs 25-50) Delicious food is served either in the garden or inside in AC relief. Try the yummy *masala dosa* or the never-ending North Indian thalis dished out by waiters in red turbans.

Hotel Siddharth (New Market; mains Rs 35-80; 🕒 8am-11pm) On top of the market, the Siddharth offers curtained booths and rooftop seating.

It has a huge selection of vegetarian and meaty dishes, plus booze.

Swapna Lodge Restaurant (MG Rd; mains Rs 30-100; ☎ 9am-11pm) On the 2nd floor of the building next to Hotel Tourist, Swapna Lodge has good grub, cold beer and a 1970s lounge feel. Its open-air terrace is perfect for evening dining.

Getting There & Away

BUS

From the **bus stand** (☎ 251344), buses run direct to Badami (Rs 60, 4½ hours, seven daily) and Bidar (Rs 150, seven hours, four daily). Buses head every half-hour to Gulbarga (Rs 70, four hours), Hubli (Rs 80, six hours) and Sholapur (Rs 61, two hours). Eight evening buses go to Bengaluru (deluxe Rs 292, 12 hours) via Hospet, and a few buses a day go to Hyderabad (deluxe Rs 312, 10 hours) and Pune (Rs 172, eight hours).

The plentiful private bus agencies near the bus stand run services to Bengaluru (Rs 350) and Mumbai (Rs 380), as well as to Hubli (Rs 140), Mangalore (Rs 370) and other destinations.

TRAIN

From **Bijapur train station** (☎ 244888), there are four daily trains to Sholapur (Rs 21, 2½ hours), which has connections to Mumbai, Hyderabad and Bengaluru. An express to Bengaluru (sleeper/3AC Rs 310/550, 12 hours, three weekly) also passes through, as do 'fast passenger' trains to Mumbai (chair/sleeper Rs 70/151, 12 hours, three weekly) and Hyderabad (sleeper Rs 123, 15½ hours, daily).

Getting Around

Autorickshaws are oddly expensive in Bijapur; Rs 30 (plus haggling) should get you between the train station and the town centre. Between the Golgumbaz and Ibrahim Rouza they cost about Rs 30. Tonga drivers are eager for business but charge around the same. Autorickshaw drivers ask for Rs 200 for four hours around town.

BIDAR

☎ 08482 / pop 172,298 / elev 664m

Tucked away in Karnataka's far northeast corner, Bidar is an afterthought on most travellers' itineraries. This is a great shame since the old walled town has some amazing ruins and monuments dating from its time as the capital of the Bahmani kingdom

(1428-87), and later the capital of the Barid Shahi dynasty.

Orientation & Information

The modern town centre is strung along Udgir Rd, along which you'll also find the bus station. Fast internet access is available at **Arien Computers** (per hr Rs 20; ☎ 9.30am-10.30pm) around the corner from the Krishna Regency.

Sights

BIDAR FORT

You can wander peacefully for hours around the magnificent 15th-century **Bidar Fort** (admission free; ☎ dawn-dusk), sprawled across rolling hills, 2km east of Udgir Rd. Surrounded by a triple moat hewn out of solid red rock and 5.5km of defensive wall (the second longest in India), the fort has a fairy-tale entrance on a roadway that twists in an elaborate chicane through three gateways.

Inside the fort are many evocative ruins, including the **Rangin Mahal** (Painted Palace) which sports elaborate tilework, woodwork and panels with mother-of-pearl inlay, and the **Solah Kambah Mosque** (Sixteen-Pillared Mosque). There's also a small **museum** (admission free; ☎ 9am-6pm) in the former royal bath. If you're looking for a guide, call the **archaeological office** (☎ 230418) and ask for Abdul Mumaf.

BAHMANI TOMBS

The huge domed **tombs** (admission free) of the Bahmani kings, in Ashtur, 2km east of Bidar, have a desolate, moody beauty that strikes a strange harmony with the sunny hills around them. These impressive mausoleums were built to house the remains of the sultans – their graves are still regularly draped with fresh satin and flowers – and are arranged in a long line along the edge of the road. The painted interior of Ahmad Shah I's tomb is the most impressive.

OTHER SIGHTS

Dominating the heart of the old town are the remains of **Khwaja Mahmud Gawan Madrasa** (admission free), a college built in 1492. The remnants of coloured tiles on the front gate and one of the minarets gives an idea of how grand the building once was.

Bidri artists (see p934) still tap away at their craft in the back streets on and around Chowbara Rd, near Basveshwar Circle.

BIDRI: THE ART OF BIDAR

Around the 14th century, the Persian craftsmen of Bidar came up with an art form known as *bidriware* by moulding metals together to create imaginative blends of blackened zinc, copper, lead and tin. Embossed and overlaid or inlaid with pure silver, *bidriware* designs are heavily influenced by the typically Islamic decorative motifs and features of the time. Finely crafted pieces, such as hookahs, goblets, and jewellery boxes, are exquisitely embellished with interwoven creepers and flowing floral patterns, occasionally framed by strict geometric lines.

Sleeping & Eating

Don't expect much in the way of pampering – the best you can hope for is a clean room with AC and a hot-water shower. Places listed below are all within a few minutes' walk of the bus stand.

Hotel Mayura (☎ 228142; Udgir Rd; r from Rs 150)

Across from the bus station and set back from the road is this standard-issue government-run hotel with rooms that have clearly seen better days. The best thing about it is the non-veg restaurant-bar (mains Rs 30 to 80) with a beer garden where you can guzzle in the privacy of a privet-hedge booth.

Krishna Regency (☎ 221991; fax 228388; Udgir Rd; s/d/tr from Rs 275/325/550; 🚽) This friendly, efficiently

run hotel with a glass elevator running up the outside of the building is the best option in Bidar. There's a good range of rooms, but some lack natural light and there's no food available.

Sapna International (☎ 220991; fax 240095; Udgir Rd; s/d from Rs 300/350; 🚽) On a par with the Krishna in terms of rooms – it's just not as friendly. In its favour are its two restaurants: the pure-veg Kamat and the Atithi, which offers meat dishes and booze. Mains cost Rs 23 to 50.

Jyothi Udipi (Udgir Rd; meals Rs 20-45; 🕒 6am-11pm) This place opposite the bus stand has 21 kinds of dosa, filling South Indian thalis (Rs 20) and an ice-cream sundae named beauty ripples.

Getting There & Away

From the **bus stand** (☎ 228508), frequent services run to Gulbarga (Rs 50, three hours), which has good express-train connections to Mumbai and Bengaluru, as well as to Hyderabad (Rs 69, 3½ hours), Bijapur (Rs 131, eight hours) and Bengaluru (deluxe/AC Rs 380/707, 12 hours).

The train station, around 1km southwest of the bus stand, has daily services to Hyderabad (chair Rs 27, 4½ hours) and Bengaluru (sleeper/2AC Rs 295/801, 17 hours).

Getting Around

Rent a bike at **Diamond Cycle Taxi** (Basveshwar Circle; per day Rs 12; 🕒 7am-10pm) or arrange a tour in an autorickshaw for around Rs 250.

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