



Karnataka & Bengaluru

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Best Places to Eat

- » Karavalli (p846)
- » Koshy's Bar & Restaurant (p847)
- » Mango Tree (p880)
- » Malgudi Café (p857)
- » Namaste Café (p876)

Best Places to Stay

- » Kabini River Lodge (p865)
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- » Green Hills Estate (p868)
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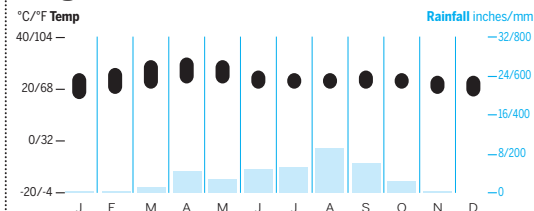
Why Go?

Rounding off the southern extent of the Deccan Plateau, sprawling Karnataka is an inexhaustible goldmine of natural, cultural and artistic variety. Complemented by an ultra-professional tourism industry and an inherently friendly population, it's a travellers' haven that makes for fun, stress-free and thoroughly enjoyable gallivanting all the way.

At the nerve centre of this mind-boggling state is silicon-capital Bengaluru (Bangalore), overfed with the good life. Scattered around the epicurean city are rolling hills rife with spice and coffee plantations, a historic town adorned in brocaded regal splendour, a paradisaical nature reserve and a group of awesome rock-cut temples dating back to medieval times. Only a stone's throw away is the Karnataka coastline, with shimmering beaches and colourful temple towns. Bringing your pleasure trip full circle are the World Heritage-listed monuments of Hampi and Pattadakal, and the forgotten battlements and ruins of Bijapur and Bidar. You're unlikely to return home disappointed.

When to Go

Bengaluru



Jan The best season to watch tigers and elephants in Karnataka's pristine national parks.

Oct Mysore's Dasara (Dussehra) carnival brings night-long celebrations and a jumbo parade.

Dec The coolest time to explore the northern districts' forts, palaces, caves and temples.

ON THE ROCKS

Magnificent bluffs and rounded boulders stand tall all over Karnataka. Anegundi (p881) and Hampi (p876) have graded boulders for some easy climbing. Challenging rock faces can be found in Badami (p884), Ramnagar, 40km south of Bengaluru, Savandurga, 50km west of the capital, and Turahalli, on Bengaluru's southern outskirts.

Fast Facts

- » Population: 61.1 million
- » Area: 191,791 sq km
- » Capital: Bengaluru (Bangalore)
- » Main languages: Kannada, Hindi, English
- » Sleeping prices: \$ below ₹1000, \$\$ ₹1000 to ₹4000, \$\$\$ above ₹4000

Jungle Jaunt

Jungle Lodges & Resorts Ltd (Map p844; ☎080-25597944; www.junglelodges.com; Shrungar Shopping Complex, MG Rd, Bengaluru; ☀10am-5.30pm Mon-Sat), is a top-class government-run organisation promoting low-impact and sustainable ecotourism in the state's many wildlife parks and reserves. Book your getaways in their Bengaluru office or online.

Resources

- » Karnataka Tourism (KSTDC) (www.karnataka-tourism.org)
- » Bengaluru city guide (www.discoverbangalore.com)

Savoury South

The diverse and delectable cuisine of Karnataka is perhaps reason enough for you to visit this state. The highest-flying of all local delicacies is the spicy *pandhi* (pork) masala, a flavourful Kodava signature dish. Mangalore, out on the coast, tosses up a train of fiery dishes – mostly seafood. The crunchy prawn *rawa* (semolina) fry and the sinful chicken ghee roast are two of Mangalore's many dishes to have gathered a pan-Indian following. Vegetarians, meanwhile, can head to Udupi to sample its legendary veg thalis. Oh, and did we mention the classic steak-and-beer joints of Bengaluru?

DON'T MISS

The **temples** of Hampi, Pattadakal, Belur and Halebid, and Somnathpur are some of India's best archaeological sites, embellished with sculptures of stellar quality.

Top State Festivals

- » Udupi Paryaya (Jan, Udupi, p873) Held in even-numbered years, with a procession and ritual marking the handover of swamis at the town's Krishna Temple.
- » Classical Dance Festival (Jan/Feb, Pattadakal, p886) Some of India's best classical dance performances.
- » Vijaya Utsav (Jan, Hampi, p876) A three-day extravaganza of culture, heritage and the arts at the foot of Hampi's Matanga Hill.
- » Tibetan New Year (Feb, Bylakuppe, p869) Lamas in Tibetan refugee settlements take shifts leading nonstop prayers that span the weeklong celebrations.
- » Vairamudi Festival (Mar/Apr, Melkote, p861) Lord Vishnu is adorned with jewels at Cheluvanarayana Temple, including a diamond-studded crown belonging to Mysore's former maharajas.
- » Ganesh Chaturthi (Sep, Gokarna, p874) Families march their Ganesh idols to the sea at sunset.
- » Dussehra (Oct, Mysore, see the boxed text, p853) Also spelt 'Dasara' in Mysore. The Maharaja's Palace is lit up in the evenings and a vibrant procession hits town to the delight of thousands.
- » Lakshadeepotsava (Nov, Dharmasthala, p872) Thousands and thousands of lamps light up this Jain pilgrimage town, offering spectacular photo ops.
- » Huthri (Nov/Dec, Madikeri, p866) The Kodava community celebrates the start of the harvesting season with ceremony, music, traditional dances and much feasting for a week.

History

A rambling playfield of religions, cultures and kingdoms, Karnataka has been ruled by a string of charismatic rulers through history. India's first great emperor, Chandragupta Maurya, made the state his retreat when he embraced Jainism at Sravanabelagola in the 3rd century BC. From the 6th to the 14th century, the land was under a series of dynasties such as the Chalukyas, Cholas, Gangas and Hoysalas, who left a lasting mark in the form of stunning caves and temples across the state.

In 1327, Mohammed Tughlaq's army sacked Halebid. In 1347, Hasan Gangu, a Persian general in Tughlaq's army led a rebellion to establish the Bahmani kingdom, which was later subdivided into five Deccan sultanates. Meanwhile, the Hindu kingdom of Vijayanagar, with its capital in Hampi, rose to prominence. Having peaked in the early 1550s, it fell in 1565 to a combined effort of the sultanates.

In subsequent years, the Hindu Wodeyars of Mysore grew in stature and extended their rule over a large part of southern India. They remained largely unchallenged until 1761, when Hyder Ali (one of their generals) deposed them. Backed by the French, Hyder Ali and his son Tipu Sultan set up capital in Srirangapatnam and consolidated their rule. However, in 1799, the British defeated Tipu Sultan and reinstated the Wodeyars. Historically, this flagged off British territorial expansion in southern India.

Mysore remained under the Wodeyars until Independence – post-1947, the reigning maharaja became the first governor. The state boundaries were redrawn along linguistic lines in 1956 and the extended Kannada-speaking state of Mysore was born. It was renamed Karnataka in 1972, with Bangalore (now Bengaluru) as the capital.

Information

The website of **Karnataka Tourism** (KSTDC; www.karnatakaturism.org) has lots of relevant information.

Several government offices in Karnataka remain closed on alternate Saturdays.

ACCOMMODATION In Karnataka, luxury tax is 4% on rooms costing ₹151 to ₹400, 8% on those between ₹401 and ₹1000, and 12% on anything over ₹1000. Some midrange and top-end hotels may add a further service charge.

Getting There & Away

The main gateway to Karnataka is Bengaluru, serviced by most domestic airlines and some international carriers.

Coastal Mangalore is a transit point for those going north to Goa, or south to Kerala. Hubli, in central Karnataka, is a major railway junction for routes going into Maharashtra and northern India.

Getting Around

The **Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation** (KSRTC) has a superb bus network across the state. Taxis with drivers are easily available in major towns. For long trips, most taxis charge around ₹7 per kilometre for a minimum of 250km, plus a daily allowance of ₹150 for the driver.

SOUTHERN KARNATAKA

Bengaluru (Bangalore)

080 / POP 5.7 MILLION / ELEV 920M

Despite its grim consequences in real life, getting 'Bangalored' has always had sunnier implications for travellers. The hub of India's booming IT industry, cosmopolitan Bengaluru is the numero uno city in the Indian deep south, blessed with a benevolent climate, a handful of interesting sights and a progressive dining, drinking and shopping scene. Located within close range of Kerala and Tamil Nadu, it's also a great base for those venturing out across southern India.

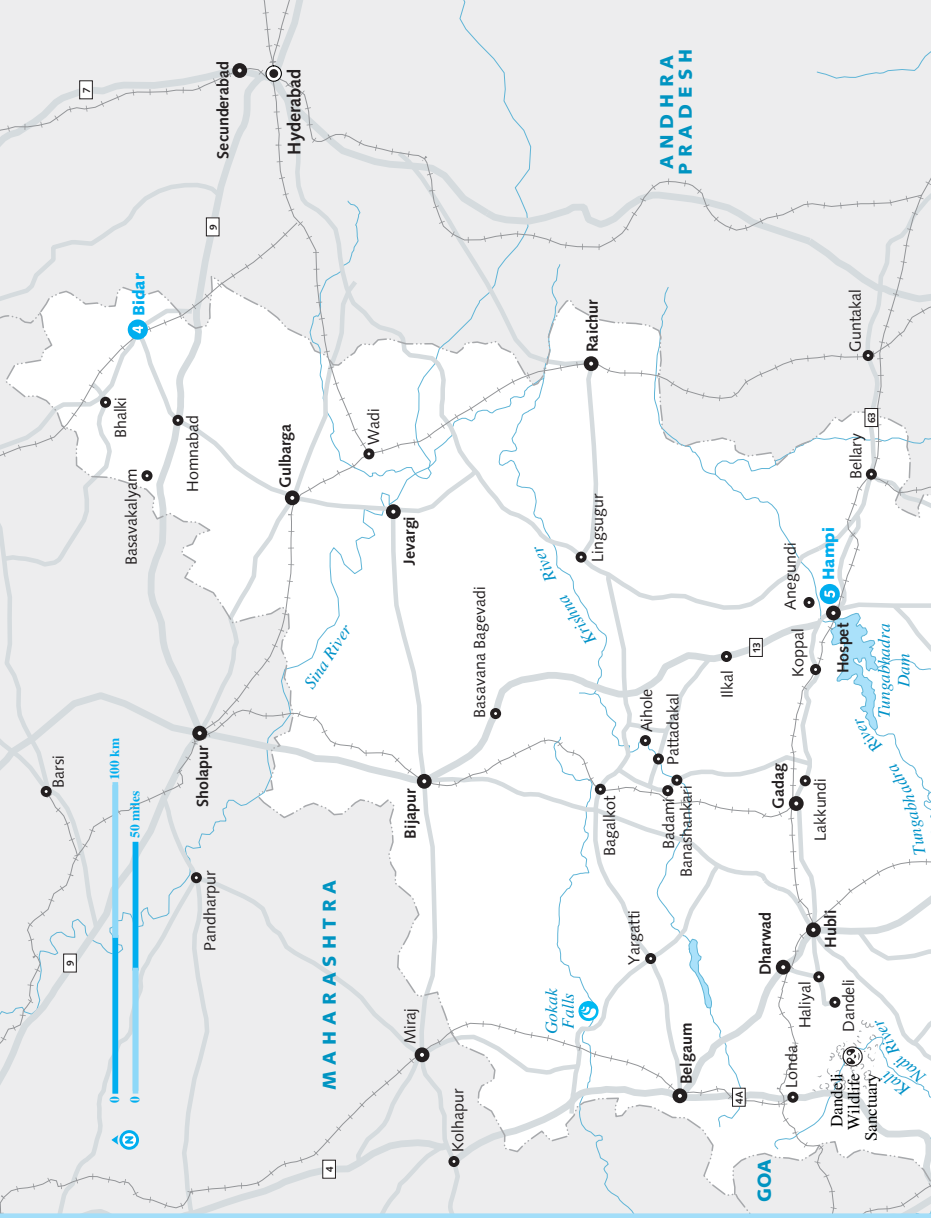
In recent times, Bengaluru has seen a mad surge of development, coupled with traffic congestion and rising pollution levels. However, it's a city that has also taken care to preserve its greens and its colonial heritage. So while urbanisation continually pushes its boundaries outward, the central district (dating back to the Raj years) remains more or less unchanged. Of interest to travellers are Gandhi Nagar (the old quarters); Mahatma Gandhi (MG) Rd, the heart of British-era Bangalore; and the Central Business District (CBD), north of MG Rd, across the greens.

Locally known as Majestic, Gandhi Nagar is a crowded area where Bengaluru's central bus stand and the City train station are located. A few historical relics lie to its south, including Lalbagh Botanical Gardens and Tipu Sultan's palace.

About 4km east are the high streets bounded by Mahatma Gandhi (MG), Brigade, St Mark's and Residency (FM Cariappa) Rds. This is Bengaluru's cosmopolitan hub, with parks, tree-lined streets, churches, grand houses and military establishments. In between are sandwiched the golf club, the racecourse and the cricket stadium.

Karnataka Highlights

- 1 Be bowled over by the awesome royal palace and the technicolour Devaraja Market in **Mysore** (p852)
- 2 Savour aromatic coffee while recharging your soul in the cool highlands of the **Kodagu Region** (p866)
- 3 Drink yourself under the table, or stab into top-notch global cuisine in **Bengaluru** (p837)
- 4 Stride across the deserted ramparts of the 15th century fort in **Bidar** (p889)
- 5 Marvel at the gravity-defying boulders, and wander among the melancholic ruins of **Hampi** (p876)



- 6** Soak up the electric ambience of the atmospheric Krishna Temple in **Udupi** (p873)
- 7** Spy on lazy tuskers and listen to exotic birds in the forests bordering the serene **Kabini Lake** (p865)



TAMIL
NADU

To Dindigul
(140km)

KERALA

ARABIAN
SEA

Finding your way around Bengaluru can be difficult at times. In certain areas, roads are named after their widths (eg 80ft Rd). The city also follows a system of mains and crosses: 3rd cross, 5th main, Residency Rd, for example, refers to the third lane on the fifth street branching off Residency Rd.

History

Literally meaning 'Town of Boiled Beans', Bengaluru supposedly derived its name from an ancient incident involving an old village woman who served cooked pulses to a lost and hungry Hoysala king. Kempegowda, a feudal lord, was the first person to earmark Bengaluru's extents by building a mud fort in 1537. The town remained obscure until 1759, when it was gifted to Hyder Ali by the Mysore maharaja.

The British arrived in 1809 and made it their regional administrative base in 1831, renaming it Bangalore. During the Raj era, the city played host to many a British officer, including Winston Churchill, who enjoyed life here during his greener years and famously left a debt (still on the books) of ₹13 at the Bangalore Club.

Now home to countless software, electronics and business outsourcing firms, Bengaluru's knack for technology developed early. In 1905 it was the first Indian city to

have electric street lighting. Since the 1940s, it has been home to Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL), India's largest aerospace company. And if you can't do without email, you owe it all to a Bangalorean – Sabeer Bhatia, the inventor of Hotmail, grew up here.

The city's name was changed back to Bengaluru in November 2006, though few care to use it in practice.

Sights

Cubbon Park

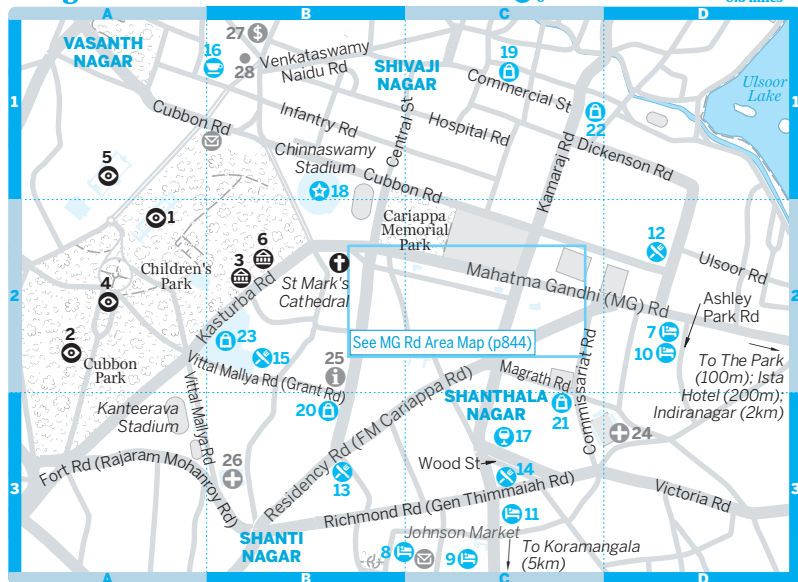
GARDEN

(Map p840) In the heart of Bengaluru's business district is Cubbon Park, a sprawling 120-hectare garden named after former British commissioner Sir Mark Cubbon. Under its leafy boughs, groups of Bengaluru's residents converge to steal a moment from the rat race that rages outside. Idlers, thinkers, lovers, dreamers and health freaks, you'll find them all here, immersed in their own indulgences.

On the fringes of Cubbon Park are the red-painted Gothic-style **State Central Library** and two municipal museums. For the gadget-oriented traveller, there's the **Visvesvaraya Industrial and Technical Museum** (Map p840; Kasturba Rd; admission ₹15; ☺10am-6pm Mon-Sat), which showcases a wide range of electrical and engineering displays, from a replica of the Wright brothers' 1903 flyer to

Bengaluru: MG Rd & Cubbon Park

0 1 km
0 0.5 miles



21st-century virtual-reality games. The **Government Museum** (Kasturba Rd; admission ₹4; ☺10am-5pm Tue-Sun) to the south houses a collection of stone carvings and relics. The attached **Venkatappa Art Gallery** (admission free; ☺10am-5pm Tue-Sun) preserves several works and personal memorabilia of K Venkatappa (1887-1962), court painter to the Wodeyars.

At the northwestern end of Cubbon Park are the colossal neo-Dravidian-style **Vidhana Soudha**, built in 1954, and the neoclassical **Attara Kacheri**, that houses the High Court. Both are closed to the public.

Bengaluru Palace

PALACE

(off Map p842; Palace Rd; Indian/foreigner ₹100/200, camera/video ₹500/1000; ☺10am-6pm) The private residence of the Wodeyars, erstwhile maharajas of the state, Bengaluru Palace preserves a slice of bygone royal splendour for you to see. Aged retainers show you around the building, designed to resemble Windsor Castle, and you can marvel at the lavish interiors and galleries featuring hunting trophies, family photos and a collection of nude portraits. Ask before you get clicking. The palace grounds, inter-

estingly, are now Bengaluru's hottest concert arena, having hosted rock 'n' roll biggies such as Iron Maiden, the Rolling Stones, Aerosmith and Deep Purple.

Lalbagh Botanical Gardens

GARDEN

(off Map p842; admission ₹10; ☺5.30am-7.30pm) Spread over 96 acres of landscaped terrain, the expansive Lalbagh gardens were laid out in 1760 by Hyder Ali. You can take a guided tour in a ten-seater ecofriendly buggy (per head ₹100), and learn about the centuries-old trees and collections of plants from around the world. A beautiful glasshouse, modelled on the original Crystal Palace in London, is the venue for flower shows in the weeks preceding Republic Day (26 January) and Independence Day (15 August). Walk in early on Sundays and you can hear the police band perform at the Police Bandstand.

Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath

ART GALLERY

(Map p842; www.karnatakachitrakalaparishath.com; Kumarakrupa Rd; admission ₹10; ☺10.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat) This visual arts gallery is Bengaluru's premier art institution. A wide range of Indian and international contemporary art is on show in its galleries (open

Bengaluru: MG Rd & Cubbon Park

👁 Sights

- 1 Attara Kacheri (High Court) A2
- 2 Cubbon Park A2
- 3 Government Museum B2
- 4 State Central Library A2
Venkatappa Art Gallery (see 3)
- 5 Vidhana Soudha A1
- 6 Visvesvaraya Industrial and
Technical Museum B2

🛌 Sleeping

- 7 Ashley Inn D2
- 8 Casa Piccola Cottage B3
- 9 Casa Piccola Service Apartments C3
- 10 Hotel Ajantha D2
- 11 Tom's C3

🍴 Eating

- 12 Caperberry D2
- 13 Harima B3
- 14 Olive Beach C3
- 15 Sunny's B2

🍷 Drinking

- 16 Infinitea B1
- 17 Plan B C3

Shiro (see 23)

🎮 Entertainment

- INOX (see 12)
- 18 M Chinnaswamy Stadium B1

🛍 Shopping

- 19 Fabindia C1
- 20 Ffolio B3
- 21 Garuda Mall C3
- 22 Mysore Saree Udyog C1
- 23 UB City B2

Information

- 24 Hosmat D3
- 25 Karnataka State Tourism
Development Corporation B2
- 26 Mallya Hospital B3
- Skyway (see 25)
- STIC Travels (see 27)
- 27 TT Forex B1

Transport

- 28 Kingfisher Airlines B1
- KSRTC Booking Counter (see 13)

10.30am to 7pm), while permanent displays showcase lavish gold-leaf works of Mysore-style paintings and folk and tribal art from across Asia. A section is devoted to the works of Russian master Nicholas Roerich, known for his vivid paintings of the Himalayas, and his son Svetoslav.

Tipu Sultan's Palace

PALACE
(Map p842; Albert Victor Rd; Indian/foreigner ₹5/100, video ₹25; ☉8.30am-5.30pm) Close to the vibrant Krishnarajendra (City) Market stands the elegant palace of Tipu Sultan, notable for its teak pillars and ornamental frescoes. Though not as beautiful (or well-maintained) as Tipu's summer palace in Srirangapatnam, it's an interesting monument, and worth an outing when combined with other nearby sights such as the **Krishnarajendra (City) Market** (Map p842), the massive **Jama Masjid** (Map p842; Silver Jubilee (SJ) Park Rd; admission free), the remains of Kempegowda's **fort** (Map p842) and the ornate **Venkataraman Temple** (Map p842; Krishnarajendra Rd; ☉8.30am-6pm).

Bull Temple & Dodda Ganesha Temple

HINDU TEMPLES
(Bull Temple Rd, Basavangudi; ☉7am-8.30pm) Built by Kempegowda in the 16th-century Dravidian style, the Bull Temple contains a huge granite monolith of Nandi and is one of Bengaluru's most atmospheric temples. Nearby is the **Dodda Ganesha Temple** (Bull Temple Rd, Basavangudi; ☉7am-8.30pm), with an equally enormous Ganesha idol. The temples are about a kilometre south of Tipu Sultan's Palace, down Krishnarajendra Rd.

Iskcon Temple

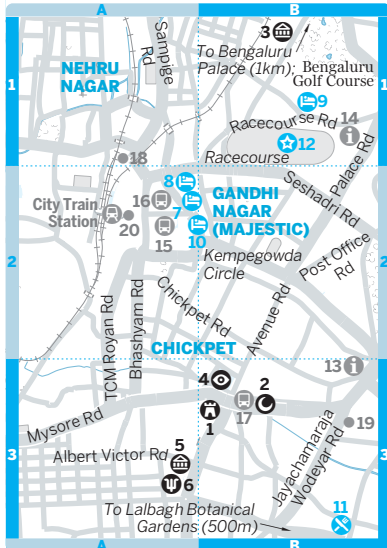
HINDU TEMPLE
(Hare Krishna Hill, Chord Rd; ☉7am-1pm & 4-8.30pm) Built by the International Society of Krishna Consciousness (Iskcon), also referred to as the Hare Krishnas, this shiny temple, 8km northwest of the town centre, is lavishly decorated in a mix of ultra-contemporary and traditional styles. The Sri Radha Krishna Mandir has a stunning shrine to Krishna and Radha. The temple is a 20-minute autorickshaw ride from MG Rd, near Yeshvantpur train station.

HAL Aerospace Museum & Heritage Centre

MUSEUM
(Airport-Varthur Rd; admission ₹20, camera/video ₹25/45; ☉9am-5pm Tue-Sun) For a peek into India's aeronautical history, visit this wonderful museum past the old airport, where you can see some of the indigenous aircraft

Bengaluru: Chickpet & Gandhi Nagar

0 400 m
0.2 miles



models designed by HAL. Interesting exhibits include the infamous MIG-21, home-grown models such as the Marut and Kiran, and a vintage Canberra bomber. You can also engage in mock dogfights at the simulator machines (₹10) on the top floor.

Activities

Ayurveda & Yoga

The staff at **Chirayu Ayurvedic Health & Rejuvenation Centre** (☎25500855; 6th block, 17th D Main, Koramangala; ☉8.30am-6pm) take their practice seriously, so don't make vague demands like 'I'd like a massage!' Make an appointment, discuss your problems, and the resultant therapy – prescribed by in-house experts – could range from a day-long session to long-term programs. Allergy, diabetes, asthma and other critical diseases can be treated.

Based in the eastern suburb of Whitefield, **Ayurvedagram** (☎27945430; www.ayurvedagram.com; Hemmandanhalli) is a reputed ayurvedic treatment centre that customises packages for individual disorders. For a more lavish experience, try **Soukya** (☎28017000; www.soukya.com; Soukya Rd, Samethanahalli, Whitefield; ☉6am-8.30pm), an internationally renowned place set on a picture-perfect 30-acre organic farm that of-

Bengaluru: Chickpet & Gandhi Nagar

Sights

- 1 Fort B3
- 2 Jama Masjid B3
- 3 Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath B1
- 4 Krishnarajendra (City) Market B3
- 5 Tipu Sultan's Palace A3
- 6 Venkataraman Temple A3

Sleeping

- 7 Hotel Adora A2
- 8 JP Cordial A2
- 9 Taj West End B1
- 10 Tricolour Hotel A2

Eating

- 11 Mavalli Tiffin Rooms (MTR) B3

Entertainment

- 12 Bangalore Turf Club B1

Information

- 13 Karnataka State Tourism Development Corporation B3
- 14 Karnataka Tourism B1

Transport

- 15 Central Bus Stand A2
- 16 City Bus Stand A2
- 17 City Market Bus Stand B3
- 18 Divisional Railway Office A1
- Indian Airlines (see 19)
- 19 Jet Airways B3
- 20 Train Reservation Office A2

fers some of the best programs in ayurvedic therapy and yoga (per hour therapy Indian/foreigner ₹2750/US\$55). Long-term packages are also available.

Stylish **Urban Yoga Centre** (☎32005720; www.urbyoga.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 (☎26722750; www.getoffurass.com; 858 1D Main Rd, Giri Nagar 2nd Phase) has perfect recipes for outward-bound adventures, including rafting, kayaking, trekking and mountaineering in Karnataka and elsewhere. It also sells and rents outdoor gear.

Tours

Bangalore Walks

WALKING

(☎9845523660, 9845068416; www.bangalorewalks.com) A must-do. Choose between a traditional walk, medieval walk, garden walk or Victorian walk to get under Bengaluru's skin. Held on Saturdays and Sundays (7am to 10am), the walks (adult/child ₹500/300) are all about knowing and loving Bengaluru in a way that many locals have forgotten. There's a scrummy breakfast en route. Book in advance; each walk takes a maximum of 15 people.

Bus Tours

SIGHTSEEING

The state tourism department runs a couple of city bus tours, all of which begin at Badami House. The basic city tour runs twice daily at 7.30am and 2pm (ordinary/deluxe ₹170/190), while a 16-hour tour to Srirangapatnam, Mysore and Brindavan Gardens

departs daily at 6.30am (ordinary/deluxe ₹530/680). There are longer tours to other destinations; enquire at the Karnataka Tourism offices.

Sleeping

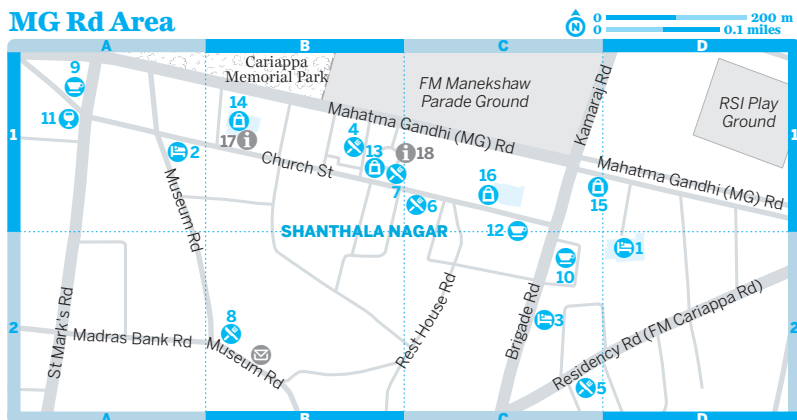
Hotel tariffs are skyrocketing in Bengaluru even as you read this. Decent rooms are perpetually in short supply, and a good night's sleep will set you back by at least ₹1000. Serviced apartments are frequently a better deal than many midrange and top-end hotels. Most hotels have 24-hour checkout. Book early.

Stacks of hotels line Subedar Chatram (SC) Rd, east of the bus stands and train station. It's a loud and seedy area, but convenient if you're in transit. For longer stays, consider moving into town, preferably closer to MG Rd. All hotels listed here have hot water, at least in the mornings.

Taj West End

HERITAGE HOTEL \$\$\$

(Map p842; ☎66605660; www.tajhotels.com; Racecourse Rd; s/d incl breakfast from ₹11,600/12,800; 🍷🍷🍷) The West End saga flashbacks to 1887, when it was inceptioned by a British family as a 10-room hostel for passing army officers. Since then, nostalgia has been a permanent resident at this lovely property which – spread over 20 acres of tropical gardens – has evolved as a definitive icon of Indian luxury hospitality. Its pearly mansions and villas seamlessly mix heritage with modern comforts, with verandahs overlooking the verdant greens that come alive with the chirping of exotic birds every day. Get antiquated in style.



TOP CHOICE Casa Piccola

Cottage

HERITAGE HOTEL \$\$

(Map p840; ☎22270754; www.casapiccola.com; 2 Clapham Rd; r incl breakfast from ₹3600; 🍷🍷) Located on a quiet back lane in Richmond Town, this beautifully renovated 1915 cottage is a tranquil sanctuary from the city madness. With an uncanny ability to make you feel immediately at home, it offers a personalised brand of hospitality that has garnered it a solid reputation. Its studio rooms are high on old-world charm, and the gazebo in the garden is a nice place to tuck into your free breakfast.

Ashley Inn

GUESTHOUSE \$\$

(Map p840; ☎41233415; www.ashleyinn.in; 11 Ashley Park Rd; s/d incl breakfast from ₹1800/2200; 🍷🍷) Once in a while, we all come across a hotel that gets it right without trying too hard. Ashley Inn is one such place. Seconds from the MG Rd mayhem, with eight pleasant rooms in soothing colours, this sweet guesthouse evokes that homely feeling you sometimes desperately yearn for while on the move.

Tom's

HOTEL \$\$

(Map p840; ☎25575875; 1/5 Hosur Rd; s/d incl breakfast from ₹1199/1399; 🍷🍷) Long favoured for its unbelievably low tariffs, cheerful Tom's allows you to stay in the heart of town for a song. Yes, there's been some cost-cutting since we last visited, but rooms are spacious, the linen spotless, and the staff professional. Ask for a north-facing room; they come with balconies.

Villa Pottipati

HERITAGE HOTEL \$\$

(☎23360777; www.neemranahotels.com; 142 8th Cross, 4th Main, Malleswaram; s/d incl breakfast from ₹4000/4500; 🍷🍷) Located a little off-centre,

this heritage building was once the garden home of an expat Andhra family. Needless to say, it's flooded with memories in the form of numerous artefacts scattered within its rooms. Dollops of quaintness are added by features such as antique four-poster beds and arched doorways, while the overall ambience gains from a garden full of ageless trees, seasonal blossoms and a dunk-sized pool.

Hotel Ajantha

HOTEL \$

(Map p840; ☎25584321; www.hotelajantha.in; 22A MG Rd; s/d from ₹475/750, d with AC from ₹999; 🍷) Old Indian tourism posters and stacks of potted foliage welcome you into this oldie located off MG Rd, with a range of par-for-the-course rooms in a semi-quiet compound. Being dirt cheap, it's insanely popular with budget travellers, so book well ahead.

Tricolour Hotel

HOTEL \$\$

(Map p842; ☎41279090; www.ibchotels-resorts.com; 15 Tank Bund Rd; s/d ₹1300/1600; 🍷🍷) This pseudo-boutique hotel should be your first option if you want to sleep in relative comfort while being close to the bus and train stations. It's both classy and contemporary, with primly laid-out rooms and cheerful, sky-lit foyers. Col Sanders sells his legendary fried chicken at the glitzy mall next door.

JP Cordial

HOTEL \$\$

(p842; ☎40214021; www.jpccordial.com; 68 SC Rd; d incl breakfast Indian/foreigner from ₹3600/US\$95; 🍷🍷) A rather pleasant business hotel straddling the maddening commotion on SC Rd, this designer place meets requisite luxury standards, and the amiable staff is always ready to meet your requirements. It's one of the better mid-rangers in this part of town.

MG Rd Area

Sleeping

- 1 Brindavan Hotel..... D2
- 2 Hotel Empire International..... A1
- 3 Monarch..... C2

Eating

- 4 Ebony..... B1
- 5 Karavalli..... C2
- 6 Oye! Amritsar..... C1
- 7 Queen's Restaurant..... B1
- 8 The Only Place..... B2

Drinking

- 13th Floor..... (see 4)
- 9 Barista..... A1
- 10 Café Coffee Day..... C2

- 11 Koshy's Bar & Restaurant..... A1
- 12 Matteo..... C1

Shopping

- 13 Blossom..... B1
- 14 Bombay Store..... B1
- 15 Cauvery Arts & Crafts
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- 16 Magazines..... C1

Information

- 17 Government of India Tourist
Office..... B1
- 18 Jungle Lodges & Resorts Ltd..... C1
- Monarch..... (see 3)

Casa Piccola Service Apartments HOTEL \$\$
(Map p840; ☎22270754; www.casapiccola.com; Wellington Park Apartments, Wellington St; r from ₹2400; ☹) One of Bengaluru's many sleek serviced apartments, this place offers a set of well-appointed two- and three-bedroom flats located within a residential complex on a shared basis. Tastefully done up in pastel shades, they're stocked with all amenities. It's owned by the Oberoi family, who run the Casa Piccola Cottage across the lane.

Ista Hotel

HOTEL \$\$\$

(off Map p840; ☎25558888; www.istahotels.com; 1/1 Swami Vivekananda Rd, Ulsoor; d from ₹8099; ☹@☹) With its name meaning 'sacred space', Ista delivers accommodation happiness in a cool, minimalist style. The smallish but elegant rooms with king-sized windows offer sweeping vistas across Ulsoor lake. The bar and restaurant, opening on to the rooftop pool, are swell, and the spa will pamper you with diverse treatments kicking off at around ₹1300.

Hotel Empire International

HOTEL \$\$

(Map p844; ☎25593743; www.hotelempire.in; 36 Church St; s/d incl breakfast from ₹1550/1850; ☹@) Consistency is the Empire's middle name. The bright and airy rooms are as clean and well-serviced, the front desk as professional and courteous, and the overall vibe as cheerful as on our previous visits. Combined with its location in the heart of all the action and nightlife, it's a sure deal.

Monarch

HOTEL \$\$

(Map p844; ☎25591915; www.monarchhotels.in; 54 Brigade Rd; s/d incl breakfast from ₹25000/3500;

☹☹) Between you and us, a night at the Monarch should be costing twice as much. Don't tell them, though. Just lie back in one of their super-comfy rooms and make the most of their innumerable facilities (free wi-fi, 24-hour currency exchange counter, courier service and a dozen others). Then follow it up with a rocking evening on the town.

Brindavan Hotel

HOTEL \$

(Map p844; ☎25584000; 108 MG Rd; s/d from ₹750/900; ☹) Being located conveniently off central Bengaluru's main drag, this budget dive is perennially booked out, and you need to call well in advance if you want to check into one of its plain and characterless (though tidy and airy) rooms. There's an in-house astro-palmist, if you're interested.

Hotel Adora

HOTEL \$

(Map p842; ☎22200024; 47 SC Rd; s/d from ₹425/650) A largish and popular budget option near the stations, with unfussy rooms with clean sheets. Downstairs is a good veg restaurant, Indraprastha. Walk-in reservations only.

The Park

HOTEL \$\$\$

(off Map p840; ☎25594666; 14/7 MG Rd; s/d incl breakfast from ₹15,000/16,000) A swanky designer hotel with oodles of glitz and glam. Home to the reputed Italian restaurant, **i-t.ALIA**.

Eating

Bengaluru's adventurous dining scene keeps pace with the whims and rising standards of its hungry, moneyed masses. Unless stated otherwise, all restaurants are open from noon

to 3pm, and 7pm to 11pm. It's best to book a table in some (telephone numbers listed).

If and when the state government passes a much-discussed anti cow-slaughter bill, beef may go off the menus in many mid-range restaurants.

MG ROAD AREA



Karavalli

SEAFOOD \$\$\$

(Map p844; ☎66604545; The Gateway Hotel; 66 Residency Rd; mains ₹450-500) The Arabian Sea is some 500km away, but you'll have to come only as far as this superb spot to savour South India's finest coastal cuisines. It's designed like a seaside villa, and the decor is a stylish mash of thatched roofs and vintage woodwork. The juicy Lobster Balchao is an eternal favourite, as are the fiery Mangalorean fishy delights. And there's the divine Bebinca with vanilla ice-cream for dessert.

Oye! Amritsar

NORTH INDIAN \$\$

(Map p844; 4th fl, Asha Enclave, Church St; mains ₹150-180) Pining for some good old Punjabi fare in South India? This is where you'll find it all. A *dhaba*-style eatery with funky souped-up decor, this restaurant serves some lip-smacking dishes from the northern state, best washed down with a glass of yoghurt-based lassi.

The Only Place

STEAKHOUSE \$\$

(Map p844; 13 Museum Rd; mains ₹200-220) Juicy steaks, brawny burgers and the classic shepherd's pie – no one serves them better than this time-tested restaurant which has many an expat loyalist in town. It's a place that doesn't encourage much conversation, simply because you've got your mouth full most of the time.

Queen's Restaurant

INDIAN \$

(Map p844; Church St; mains ₹80-100) This reputed joint serves some quick and tasty Indian morsels such as a range of vegetable and dhal preparations, to go with fluffy and hot chapati. The interiors are rustic, with painted motifs adorning earthy walls.

Ebony

MULTICUISINE \$\$\$

(Map p844; ☎41783344; 13th fl, Barton Centre, 84 MG Rd; mains ₹150-180) Serves the best Parsi food in town, along with some delectable Thai, French and Indian dishes. The interiors are classy, and the rooftop location heavenly.

Palm Grove

SOUTH INDIAN \$

(Ballal Residency, 74/3 3rd Cross, Residency Rd; mains ₹80-100; ☎7am-10.30pm) One of the

best places in Bengaluru's central district where you can tuck into authentic South Indian veg fare, such as dosas, vadas and multicourse thalis.

OTHER AREAS



Mavalli Tiffin Rooms

SOUTH INDIAN \$

(MTR; Map p842; Lalbagh Rd; mains ₹40-60; ☎6.30-11am, 12.30-2.45pm, 3.30-7.30pm & 8-9.30pm) A legendary name in South Indian comfort food, this super-popular eatery, commonly called MTR, has had Bengaluru eating out of its hands since 1924. Head up to the dining room upstairs, queue for a table, and then admire the dated images of southern beauties etched on smoky glass as waiters bring you savoury local fare, capped by frothing filter coffee served in silverware. It's a definitive Bengaluru experience; don't leave town without trying it.

Caperberry

CONTINENTAL \$\$

(Map p840; ☎25594567; 121 Dickenson Rd; mains ₹240-270) A smart blend of European monochromes and glittering South Indian gold-work create a sophisticated ambience at this fancy restaurant specialising in Spanish food. Paella, or pear and asparagus salad? Take your pick from the extensive menu, and match it with a sangria on the side.

Windsor Pub

MULTICUISINE \$\$

(7 Kodava Samaja Bldg, 1st Main Vasanthnagar; mains ₹220-280) The awesome fillet steak belted out by this relaxed eatery near Bangalore Palace qualifies as the ultimate death-row meal for many a Bengaluru foodie. And that's not forgetting the flavoursome Mangalorean fish fries, or the tangy *pandhi* (pork) masala from Kodagu's hills. Beer flows freely from the taps as you gleefully stuff your face.

Harima

JAPANESE \$\$

(off Map p840; ☎41325757; 4th fl, Devatha Plaza, Residency Rd; mains ₹250-280) Tempura, sashimi, sushi and that refreshing sip of sake. Flavourful Japanese staples form the core of this restaurant's repertoire, noted for its minimalist interiors. It's one of Bengaluru's most underrated places, but you'll certainly spread the word once you've been there.

Olive Beach

MEDITERRANEAN \$\$\$

(Map p840; ☎41128400; 16 Wood St, Ashoknagar; mains ₹350-400) Lodged within an elegant villa in upscale Ashoknagar is this fantastic fine-dining restaurant, with food that evokes wistful memories of sunny Tuscany (or

whatever your fave Mediterranean getaway might be). Spinach and goat cheese pizza, anyone? Or crumbled sausage and cauliflower risotto, maybe? The roasted pumpkin and sage ravioli sure has a few admirers, too.

Sunny's

ITALIAN \$\$

(Map p840; ☎41329366; 34 Vittal Mallya Rd; mains ₹280-300) Cheese and olive oil conspire to work up some mouth-watering Mediterranean flavours at this popular restaurant specialising in Italian food. Its wide range of pastas, pizzas, salads and desserts are a hit with Bengaluru's expat community.

Barbeque Nation

MUGHLAI \$\$

(100ft Rd, Indiranagar; meals ₹450) Good news for kebab lovers. This stylish place has an endless supply of the grilled meaty delights for you to gorge on. Meals feature unlimited portions of a set menu which changes on a daily basis. And the meat is skewered live at your table to suit your tastes! Eat till you're beat.

Gramin

INDIAN \$\$

(☎41104104; 20, 7th Block Raheja Arcade, Koramangala; mains ₹140-160) A wide choice of flavourful and breezy North Indian fare is on offer at this extremely popular all-veg place. Try the excellent range of lentils, best had with oven-fresh rotis, or the veg kebabs.



Drinking

BARS & LOUNGES

Despite Bengaluru's rock-steady reputation as a place to get sloshed in style, local laws require pubs and discos to shut shop at 11.30pm (opening time is usually 7.30pm). However, given the wide choice of chic watering holes around, you can indulge in a spirited session of pub-hopping in this original beer town of India. The trendiest nightclubs will typically charge you a cover of around ₹1000 per couple, but it's often redeemable against drinks or food.



Koshy's Bar & Restaurant

BAR

(Map p844; 39 St Mark's Rd; ☎9am-11.30pm) They say half of Bengaluru's court cases are argued around Koshy's teetering tables, and many hard-hitting newspaper articles written over its steaming coffees. Having quenched the collective thirst of the city's intelligentsia for decades, this buzzy and joyful pub is where you can put away pints of beer and classic British meals (mains ₹170 to ₹200) in-between fervent discussions.

Plan B

PUB

(Map p840; 20 Castle St, Ashoknagar) 'Finish your beer. There are sober kids in India,' says a poster adorning this chilled-out pub's robust interiors. And to aid you in this eminently enjoyable task, there's a whole line of awesome bites from peanut masala to porky platters, and some ageless music (remember 'My Sharona?'). The place brims over with motorsports buffs on F1 racedays.

Shiro

BAR

(Map p840; UB City) A sophisticated lounge to get sloshed in style, Shiro has elegant interiors complemented by arty Buddha busts and Apsara figurines. Its commendable selection of cocktails and drinks draw rave reviews from patrons, who often fight off their Saturday night hangovers by converging again for Sunday brunch.

B Flat

BAR

(100ft Rd, Indiranagar) A pub and jazz bar that often features live performances by some of India's best bands, this place is on the radar of every jazz and blues junkie in town. There's a ₹200 entry fee, offset against moody guitar solos.

13th Floor

BAR

(Map p844; 13th fl, Barton Centre, 84 MG Rd) Come early to grab a spot on the terrace sit-out, with all of Bengaluru glittering at your feet. The atmosphere is that of a relaxed cocktail party, and you can tap your feet to a good selection of retro music.

Beach

BAR

(100ft Rd, Indiranagar) Couldn't make it to Goa? Then come to this slick beach-bum's lounge, and feel the sand between your toes (literally), as you dance away to some groovy music. Women drink free on Wednesdays, and there's the occasional quiz night for you to flaunt your GK.

CAFES & TEAHOUSES

Bengaluru is liberally sprinkled with good chain cafes. Those such as **Café Coffee Day** (Map p844; Brigade Rd; ☎8am-11.30pm) and **Barista** (Map p840; 40 St Mark's Rd; ☎8am-11.30pm) have several outlets across town. For something different, try one of the following.



Matteo

CAFE

(Map p844; Church St; ☎9am-11pm) The hippest and newest cafe in Bengaluru serves first-rate brews (try the aromatic green tea), along with tasty side-orders such as shrimp and penne pasta or a filling chicken

baguette. The coolest rendezvous in the city centre.

Infinita

CAFE

(Map p840; 2 Shah Sultan Complex, Cunningham Rd; ☎9am-11pm) The service here can be patchy at times, but the steaming cuppa that follows more than makes up for it. Its menu features orthodox teas from the best estates, alongside a few fancy names such as chocolate tea milkshake.



Entertainment

CINEMA

English-language films are popular, and tickets range from ₹150 to ₹300, depending on your theatre of choice and the show time.

INOX

CINEMA

(☎241128888; www.inoxmovies.com; 5th fl, Garuda Mall, Magrath Rd) Screens new releases from Bollywood and the West.

PVR Cinema

CINEMA

(☎22067511; www.pvrcinemas.com; Forum, 21 Hosur Rd) A megacinema with 11 screens showing Indian and international titles.

Nani Cinematheque

CINEMA

(☎22356262; 5th fl, Sona Tower, 71 Millers Rd) Classic Indian and European films are screened here Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

SPORT

Bengaluru's horse-racing seasons are from November to February and May to July. Contact the **Bangalore Turf Club** (Map p842; www.bangalorerraces.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 p840; MG Rd). Details can be found at www.cricketkarnataka.com.

THEATRE

Ranga Shankara

THEATRE

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



Shopping

Bengaluru's shopping options are abundant, ranging from teeming bazaars to glitzy malls. Some good shopping areas include Commercial St (Map p840), Vittal Mallya Rd (Map p840) and the MG Rd area.

UB City

CLOTHING

(Map p840; Vittal Mallya Rd; ☎11am-9pm) Global haute couture and Indian high fashion come to roost at this towering mall in the central district.

Cauvery Arts & Crafts Emporium

SOUVENIRS

(Map p844; 49 MG Rd; ☎10am-7pm Mon-Sat) Showcases a great collection of sandalwood and rosewood products as well as textiles.

Folio

CLOTHING

(Map p840; 5 Vittal Mallya Rd; ☎10.30am-8pm)

A good place for high Indian fashion, with another branch at Leela Galleria (23 Airport Rd, Kodihalli).

Fabindia

CLOTHING

(54 17th Main Koramangala; ☎10am-8pm) Commercial St (Map p840); Garuda mall (McGrath Rd) These branches contain Fabindia's full range of stylish clothes and home-wares in traditional cotton prints and silks.

Magazines

BOOKSTORE

(Map p844; 55 Church St) An astounding collection of international magazines. Up to 70% discount on back issues.

Blossom

BOOKSTORE

(Map p844; 84/6 Church St) Great deals on new and second-hand books.

Bombay Store

SOUVENIRS

(Map p844; 99 MG Rd; ☎10.30am-8.30pm) For gifts ranging from ecobeauty products to linens.

Mysore Saree Udyog

CLOTHING

(Map p840; 1st fl, 294 Kamaraj Rd; ☎10.30am-8.30pm Mon-Sat) A great choice for top-quality silks and saris.

Some good malls in town include **Garuda Mall** (Map p840; McGrath Rd), **Forum** (Hosur Rd; Koramangala) and **Leela Galleria** (23 Airport Rd, Kodihalli).

Information

Internet Access

Being an IT city, internet cafes are plentiful in Bengaluru, as is wi-fi access in hotels.

Café Coffee Day (Map p840; Brigade Rd; ☎8am-11.30pm) has a smoking deal comprising an hour's internet usage, cappuccino and cookies.

Left Luggage

The City train station (Map p842) and Central bus stand (Map p842) have 24-hour cloakrooms (per day ₹10).

Maps

The tourist offices give out decent city maps. The excellent *Eicher City Map* (₹200) is sold at major bookshops.

Media

O80 and *What's Up Bangalore* are great monthly magazines covering the latest in Bengaluru's social life. *Kingfisher Explicity Nights* (₹200) gives a low-down on the best night spots. All titles are available in major bookstores.

Medical Services

Most hotels here have doctors on call.

Hosmat (Map p840; ☎25593796; www.hosmat.net.com; 45 Magrath Rd) For critical injuries and other general illnesses.

Mallya Hospital (Map p840; ☎22277979; www.mallyahospital.net; 2 Vittal Mallya Rd) With a 24-hour pharmacy and emergency services.

Money

ATMs are common.

Monarch (Map p844; ☎41123253; 54 Monarch Plaza, Brigade Rd; ☎10am-8pm Mon-Sat) Deals in foreign currency, travellers cheques and ticketing.

TT Forex (Map p840; ☎22254337; 33/1 Cunningham Rd; ☎9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-1.30pm Sat) Changes travellers cheques and foreign currency.

Photography

Digital services are easy to come by.

GK Vale (89 MG Rd; ☎10am-7pm Mon-Sat) One-stop photography shop.

Post

Main post office (Map p840; Cubbon Rd; ☎10am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun)

Tourist Information

Government of India tourist office (Map p844; ☎25585417; 48 Church St; ☎9.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat)

Karnataka State Tourism Development Corporation (KSTDC; Badami House (Map p842; ☎43344334; Badami House, Kasturba Rd; ☎10am-7pm Mon-Sat); Karnataka Tourism House (Map p840; ☎41329211; 8 Papanna Lane, St Mark's Rd; ☎10am-7pm Mon-Sat). Bookings can be made for KSTDC city and state tours, as well as for luxury holidays such as the Golden Chariot.

Karnataka Tourism (Map p842; ☎22352828; 2nd fl, 49 Khanija Bhavan, Racecourse Rd; ☎10am-5.30pm Mon-Sat)

Travel Agencies

Skyway (Map p840; ☎22111401; www.skywaytour.com; 8 Papanna Lane, St Mark's Rd; ☎9am-6pm Mon-Sat) A thoroughly professional outfit with a satellite office in Mysore. Reliable for booking long-distance taxis and air tickets.

STIC Travels (Map p840; ☎22202408; www.stictravel.com; G5 Imperial Ct, 33/1 Cunningham Rd; ☎9.30am-6pm Mon-Sat) For ticketing, vehicles, hotels and holiday packages.

i Getting There & Away Air

Airline offices are generally open from 9am to 5.30pm Monday to Saturday. City offices and 24-hour helplines of domestic carriers serving Bengaluru include the following:

GoAir (☎9223222111; www.goair.in)

Indian Airlines (Map p842; ☎22277747; www.indian-airlines.nic.in; Unity Bldg, JC Rd)

DAILY FLIGHTS FROM BENGALURU

DESTINATION	STARTING FARE ₹	DURATION (HR)
Ahmedabad	3200	2
Chennai (Madras)	2300	1
Delhi	3700	2½
Goa	2600	1
Hyderabad	2400	1
Kochi	2300	1½
Kolkata (Calcutta)	3500	3
Mangalore	2300	1
Mumbai (Bombay)	3000	2
Pune	2600	1½
Trivandrum	3300	1½

MAJOR BUS SERVICES FROM BENGALURU

DESTINATION	FARE (₹)	DURATION (HR)	FREQUENCY
Chennai	274 (R)/472 (V)	7-8	15 daily
Ernakulam	484 (R)/598 (V)	10-12	7 daily
Hampi	316 (R)	8½	1 daily
Hospet	306 (R)/381 (V)	8	6 daily
Hyderabad	432 (R)/736 (V)	10-12	10 daily
Jog Falls	321 (R)	9	1 daily
Mumbai	1059 (V)	19	4 daily
Mysore	136 (R)/247 (V)	3	Every 30min
Ooty	262 (R)/357 (V)	8	8 daily
Panaji	473 (R)/779 (V)	12-14	4 daily
Puttaparthi	71 (R)/185 (V)	4	3 daily

R – Rajahamsa Semideluxe, V – Airavath AC Volvo

IndiGo (☎9910383838; www.goindigo.in)

Jet Airways (Map p842; ☎39899333, 39899999; www.jetairways.com; Unity Bldg, JC Rd)

Kingfisher Airlines (Map p840; ☎18002333131, 41148190; www.flyingfisher.com; 35/2 Cunningham Rd)

SpiceJet (☎18001803333; www.spicejet.com)

Bus

Bengaluru's huge, well-organised **Central bus stand** (Map p842; Gubbi Thotadappa Rd), also known as **Majestic**, is directly in front of the City train station. **Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation** (KSRTC; www.ksrtc.in) buses run throughout Karnataka and to neighbouring states. Other interstate bus operators:

Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (APSRTC; www.apsrtc.gov.in)

Kadamba Transport Corporation (☎22351958, 22352922) Services for Goa.

Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC; www.msrtc.gov.in)

Tamil Nadu State Transport Corporation (SETC; www.tnsrc.in)

Computerised advance booking is available for most buses at the station. **KSRTC** (Map p840; Devatha 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 line the street facing the Central bus stand, or you can book through a travel agency.

For major KSRTC bus services from Bengaluru, see the boxed text above.

Train

Bengaluru's **City train station** (Map p842; Gubbi Thotadappa Rd) is the main train hub and the place to make reservations. **Cantonment train station** (Station Rd) is a sensible spot to disembark if you're arriving and headed for the MG Rd area, while **Yeshvantpur train station** (Rahman Khan Rd), 8km northwest of downtown, is the starting point for Goa trains.

If a train is booked out, foreign travellers can avail the foreign-tourist quota. Buy a wait-listed ticket, then fill out a form at the **Divisional Railway Office** (Map p842; Gubbi Thotadappa Rd) building immediately north of the City train station. You'll know about 10 hours before departure whether you've got a seat (a good chance); if not, the ticket is refunded. The computerised **train reservation office** (Map p842; ☎139; ☀8am-8pm Mon-Sat, 8am-2pm Sun), on the left facing the station, has separate counters for credit-card purchase, women and foreigners. Luggage can be left at the 24-hour cloakroom on Platform 1 at the City train station (₹10 per bag per day).

See the boxed text p852 for information on major train services.

i Getting Around

To/From the Airport

The swish city **airport** (☎66782251; www.bengaluruairport.com) is in Hebbal, about 40km north from the MG Rd area. Prepaid taxis can take you from the airport to the city centre (₹700). You can also take the hourly shuttle Vayu Vajra AC bus service to Majestic or MG Rd (₹180).

Autorickshaw

The city's autorickshaw drivers are legally required to use their meters; few comply in reality. After 10pm, 50% is added onto the metered rate. Flag fall is ₹17 for the first 2km and then ₹9 for each extra kilometre.

Bus

Bengaluru has a thorough local bus network, operated by the **Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation** (BMTc; www.bmtcinfo.com). Red AC Vajra buses criss-cross the city, while green Big10 deluxe buses connect the suburbs. Ordinary buses run from the City bus stand (Map p842), next to Majestic; a few operate from the City Market bus stand (Map p842) further 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.

Taxi

Several places around Bengaluru offer taxi rental with driver. Standard rates for a long-haul Tata Indica cab are ₹7 per kilometre for a minimum of 250km, plus a daily allowance of ₹150 for the driver. For an eight-hour day rental, you're looking at around ₹1200. Luxury Renault cabs are also available for ₹60 for 4km kilometre and ₹15 for every subsequent kilometre. Try **Meru Cabs** (☎44224422) or **Skyway** (☎22111401).

Metro

Bengaluru's shiny new AC metro service was all set for inauguration at the time of research. With trains plying every four minutes and tickets costing marginally more than intra-city buses, the service comes as a welcome alternative to the city's congested public transport system. For the latest updates on the service, log on to www.bmrc.co.in.

Around Bengaluru

HESSARAGHATTA

Located 30km northwest of Bengaluru, Hesaraghatta is home to **Nrityagram** (☎080-28466313; www.nrityagram.org; ☀10am-2pm Tue-Sun), a leading dance academy established in 1990 to revive and popularise Indian classical dance.

The brainchild and living legacy of celebrated dancer Protima Gauri Bedi (1948-98), the complex was designed like a village by Goa-based architect Gerard da Cunha. Long-term courses in classical dance are offered to deserving students here, while local children are taught for free on Sundays. Self-guided tours cost ₹20 or you can book a tour, lecture and demonstration and vegetarian meal (₹1250, minimum 10 people).

Opposite the dance village, **Taj Kuteeram** (☎080-28466326; www.tajhotels.com; d ₹4000;

MAJOR TRAINS FROM BENGALURU

DESTINATION	TRAIN NO & NAME	FARE (₹)	DURATION (HR)	DEPARTURES
Chennai	12658 <i>Chennai Mail</i>	193/655	6	10.45pm
	12028 <i>Shatabdi</i>	510/1105	5	6am Wed-Mon
Delhi	12627 <i>Karnataka Exp</i>	546/2070	39	7.20pm
	12649 <i>Sampark Kranti Exp</i>	536/2020	35	10.10pm Mon, Wed, Fri, Sat & Sun
Hospet	16592 <i>Hampi Exp</i>	191/725	9½	9pm
Hubli	16589 <i>Rani Chennamma Exp</i>	203/745	8	9.15pm
	12864 <i>YPR Howrah Exp</i>	508/1900	35	7.35pm
Mumbai	16530 <i>Udyan Exp</i>	363/1375	24	7.50pm
Mysore	12007 <i>Shatabdi</i>	305/590	2	11am Wed-Mon
	12614 <i>Tippu Exp</i>	62/225	2½	3pm
Trivandrum	16526 <i>Kanyakumari Exp</i>	325/1217	22	9.40pm

Shatabdi fares are chair/executive; Express (Exp/Mail) fares are 2nd/chair for day trains and sleeper/2AC for night trains.

☎️) is a hotel that combines comfort with rustic charm. It also offers ayurveda and yoga sessions.

 **Our Native Village** (☎️080-41140909; www.ournativevillage.com; s/d incl full board ₹5000/6800; 🏠), an ecofriendly organic farm and resort situated in the vicinity, is a great place to unwind in style while engaging in fun activities such as flying kites, riding bullock carts or milking cows.

From Bengaluru's City Market, buses 253, 253D and 253E run to Hessarahatta (₹25, one hour), with bus 266 continuing on to Nriyagram.

NANDI HILLS

Rising to 1455m, the **Nandi Hills** (admission ₹5; 🕒6am-10pm), 60km north of Bengaluru, were once the summer retreat of Tipu Sultan. Today, it's the Bengaluru techie's favourite weekend getaway, and is predictably congested on Saturdays and Sundays. Nonetheless, it's a good place for hiking, with good views and two notable **Chola temples**. Buses head to Nandi Hills (₹50, two hours) from Bengaluru's Central bus stand.

JANAPADA LOKA FOLK ARTS MUSEUM

Situated 53km south of Bengaluru, this **museum** (adult/child ₹10/5; 🕒9am-5.30pm) dedicated to the preservation of rural cultures has a wonderful collection of folk art objects, including 500-year-old shadow puppets, festival costumes and musical instruments. Mysore-bound buses (one hour) can drop you here; get off 3km after Ramnagar.

Mysore

☎️0821 / POP 799,200 / ELEV 707M

If you haven't been to Mysore, you just haven't seen South India. Conceited though it may sound, this is not an overstatement. An ancient city with more than 600 glorious years of legacy, Mysore is one of the most flamboyant places in India. Known for its glittering royal heritage, bustling markets, magnificent monuments, cosmopolitan culture and a friendly populace, it is also a thriving centre for the production of premium silk, sandalwood and incense. It also flaunts considerable expertise in yoga and ayurveda, two trades it markets worldwide.

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-Nilgiri (BN) Rd. The Maharaja's Palace sits in the heart of the buzzing quarters southeast of the city centre. The lofty Chamundi Hill is an ever-visible landmark to the south.

History

Mysore owes its name to the mythical Mahisuru, a place where the demon Mahisasura was slain by the goddess Chamundi. Its regal history began in 1399, when the Wodeyar dynasty of Mysore was founded, though they remained in service of the Vijayanagar empire until the mid-16th century. With the fall of Vijayanagar in 1565, the Wodeyars declared their sovereignty, which – save a brief period of Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan's supremacy in the late 18th century – remained unscathed until 1947.

👁️ Sights

Maharaja's Palace

PALACE

(www.mysorepalace.tv; Indian/foreigner ₹20/200; 🕒10am-5.30pm) Among the grandest of India's royal buildings, this fantastic palace was the former seat of the Wodeyar maharajas. The old palace was gutted by fire in 1897; the one you see now was completed in 1912 by English architect Henry Irwin at a cost of ₹4.5 million.

The interior of this Indo-Saracenic marvel – a kaleidoscope of stained glass, mirrors and gaudy colours – is undoubtedly over the top. The decor is further embellished by carved wooden doors, mosaic floors and a series of paintings depicting life in Mysore during the Edwardian Raj. The way into the palace takes you past a fine collection of sculptures and artefacts. Don't forget to check out the armoury, with an intriguing collection of 700-plus weapons.

Every weekend, on national holidays, and through the Dasara celebrations, the palace is illuminated by nearly 100,000 light bulbs that accent its majestic profile against the night.

While you are allowed to snap the palace's exterior, photography within is strictly prohibited. Cameras must be deposited in lockers (₹5) at the palace entrance.

Also available within the compound is a multilingual guided audio tour of the palace, the price of which is included in the foreigners' ticket.

Devaraja Market

MARKET

(Sayyaji Rao Rd; 🕒6am-8.30pm) Dating from Tipu Sultan's reign, the spellbinding Devaraja Market is a lively bazaar that combines both the ancient and modern faces of India.

International brands compete for space here with local traders selling traditional items such as flower garlands, spices and conical piles of *kumkum* (coloured powder used for bindi dots), and their unique co-existence makes for some great photo-ops. Refresh your bargaining skills before shopping.

Chamundi Hill

SACRED SITE

At a height of 1062m, on the summit of Chamundi Hill, stands the **Sri Chamundeswari Temple** (☉7am-2pm & 3.30-9pm), dominated by a towering 40m-high *gopuram* (entrance gateway). It's a fine half-day excursion, offering spectacular views of the city below; you can take bus 201 (₹15, 30 minutes) that rumbles up the narrow road to the summit. A return autorickshaw trip will cost about ₹300.

On your way down, you can also take the foot trail comprising 1000-plus steps that Hindu pilgrims use to visit the temple. One-third of the way down is a 5m-high statue of **Nandi** (Shiva's bull) that was carved out of solid rock in 1659.

Jayachamarajendra Art Gallery

ART GALLERY

(Jaganmohan Palace Rd; adult/child ₹20/10; ☉8.30am-5pm) Built in 1861 as the royal auditorium, the **Jaganmohan Palace**, just west of the Maharaja's Palace, houses the Jayachamarajendra Art Gallery, with a collection of kitsch objects and regal memorabilia including rare musical instruments, Japanese art, and paintings by the noted artist Raja Ravi Varma.

FREE Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav

Sangrahalaya

MUSEUM

(National Museum of Mankind; www.igrms.com; Wellington Lodge, Irwin Rd; ☉10am-5.30pm Tue-Sun)

This museum functions primarily as a cultural centre and exhibition space showcasing arts from rural India. Housing excellent rotating exhibitions and a souvenir shop, the centre organises two-week workshops in traditional art forms, which are open to the public. The interiors of the museum were under renovation at the time of research but should be completed by the time you read this. Don't miss the fantastic permanent terracotta exhibition – comprising artefacts from across the country – on the front lawn.

FREE Jayalakshmi Vilas Complex

Museum

MUSEUM

(Mysore University Campus; ☉10am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, closed alternate Sat) This museum, housed in a grand mansion, specialises in folklore. A wooden puppet of the 10-headed demon Ravana, leather shadow puppets, rural costumes and a 300-year-old temple cart are part of its fantastic collection.

Rail Museum

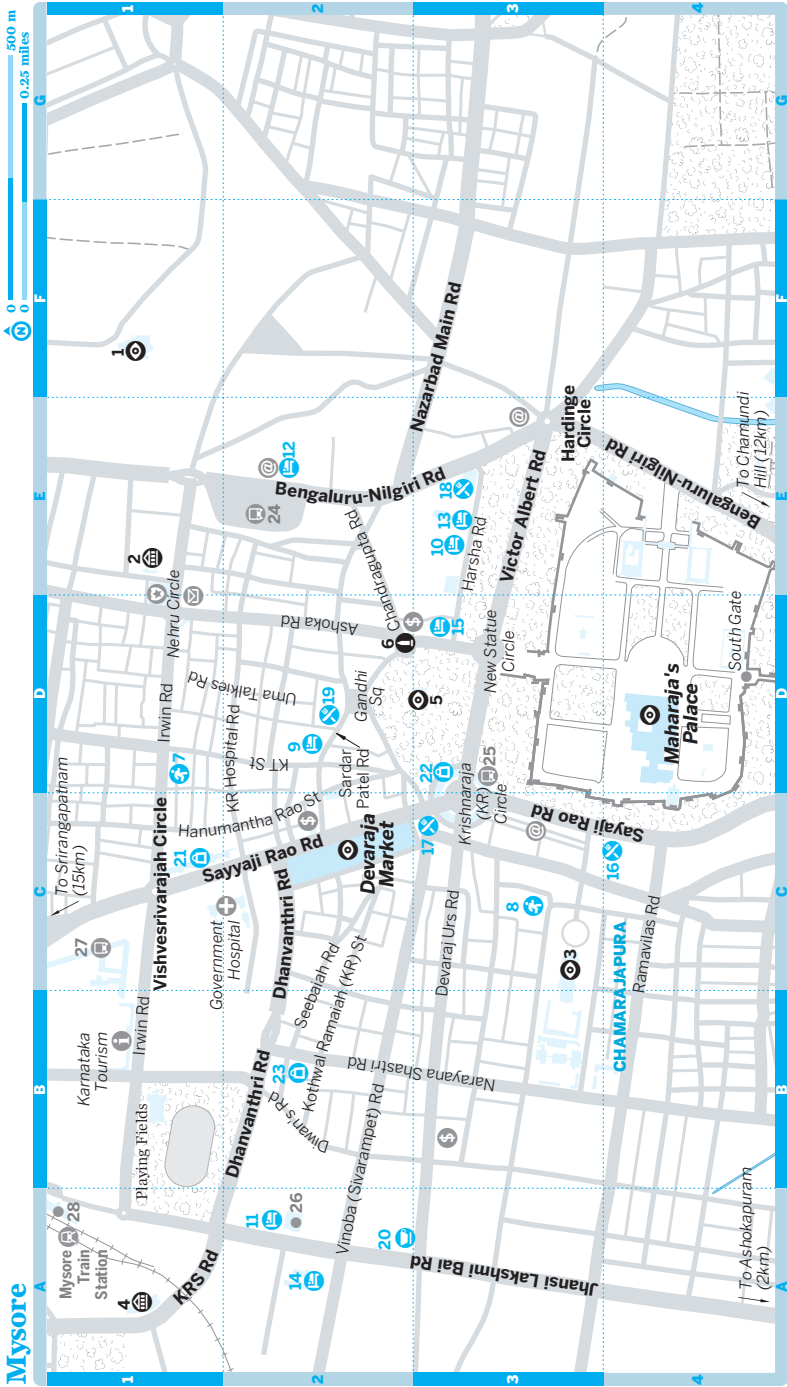
MUSEUM

(KRS Rd; adult/child ₹5/2, camera/video ₹10/25; ☉9.30am-6.30pm Tue-Sun) This one's a real gem, and certainly not to be missed. Located behind the train station, the open-air museum bears testimony to the stylish way in which the royals once rode the railways. The chief exhibit is the Mysore maharani's saloon, a wood-panelled beauty dating from 1899. There are also five steam engines, each with its own story, and a large collection of instruments and memorabilia from the Indian Railways' chequered past. It's half a day of pure fun.

DUSSEHRA JAMBOREE

Mysore is at its carnivalesque best during the 10-day Dussehra (locally spelt 'Dasara') festival in October. Every evening, the Maharaja's Palace is dramatically lit up, while the town is transformed into a gigantic fairground, with concerts, dance performances, sporting demonstrations and cultural events running to packed houses. On the last day, the celebrations are capped off in grand style. A dazzling procession of richly costumed elephants, garlanded idols, liveried retainers and cavalry kicks off around 1pm, marching through the streets to the rhythms of clanging brass bands, all the way from the palace to the Bannimantap parade ground. A torchlight parade at Bannimantap and a spectacular session of fireworks then closes the festival for the year.

Mysore is choc-a-bloc with tourists during the festival, especially on the final day. To bypass suffocating crowds, consider buying a Dasara VIP Gold Card (₹6000 for two). Though expensive, it assures you good seats at the final day gala and helps you beat the entry queues at other events and performances, while providing discounts on accommodation, dining and shopping. It's also possible to buy tickets (₹250 to ₹1000) just for entering the palace and Bannimantap for the final day's parades. Contact the local Karnataka Tourism office or the **Dasara Information Centre** (☎2418888; www.mysore.dasara.gov.in) for more details.



Mysore

📍 Top Sights

Devaraja Market	C2
Maharaja's Palace	D4

🏛️ Sights

1 Government House	F1
2 Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya	E1
Jaganmohan Palace	(see 3)
3 Jayachamarajendra Art Gallery	C3
4 Rail Museum	A1
5 Rangacharlu Memorial Hall	D3
6 Silver Jubilee Clock Tower	D2

🎭 Activities, Courses & Tours

7 Shruthi Musical Works	D1
8 Sri Patanjala Yogashala	C3

🛏️ Sleeping

9 Hotel Dasaprakash	D2
10 Hotel Maurya Residency	E3
11 Hotel Mayura Hoysala	A2
12 Pai Vista	E2
13 Parklane Hotel	E3
14 Royal Orchid Metropole	A2
15 Viceroy	D3

🍴 Eating

16 Café Aramane	C4
17 Guru Sweet Mart	C3
18 Hotel RRR	E3
19 Hotel RRR	D2
Parklane Hotel	(see 13)
Tiger Trail	(see 14)

🍷 Drinking

20 Café Coffee Day	A2
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🛍️ Shopping

21 Cauvery Arts & Crafts Emporium	C1
22 Government Silk Factory Showroom	D3
23 Sapna Book House	B2
Shruthi Musical Works	(see 7)

🚗 Transport

24 Central Bus Stand	E2
25 City Bus Stand	D3
26 Indian Airlines	A2
27 Private Bus Stand	C1
28 Railway Booking Office	A1

Other Sights

LANDMARKS

For architecture buffs, Mysore has quite a handful of charming buildings. Dating from 1805, **Government House** (Irwin Rd), formerly the British Residency, is a Tuscan Doric building set in 20 hectares of **gardens** (☺5am-9pm). Facing the north gate of the Maharaja's Palace is the 1927 **Silver Jubilee Clock Tower** (Ashoka Rd); nearby stands the imposing **Rangacharlu Memorial Hall**, built in 1884. The beauty of towering **St Philomena's Cathedral** (St Philomena St; ☺5am-6pm), built between 1933 and 1941 in neo-Gothic style, is emphasised by beautiful stained-glass windows.

Mysore's **zoo** (Indiranagar; adult/child ₹30/15, camera/video ₹10/150; ☺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

Royal Mysore Walks

WALKING

(9632044188; www.royalmysorewalks.com; per person ₹495) A walking tour is an excellent way to familiarise yourself with Mysore's epic history and heritage. Run by techie-turned-

historian Vinay, the outfit organises weekend walks with a specific focus on either the city's royal history, its markets, its old quarters or its handicrafts. Offbeat walks, such as a yoga and spirituality tour, can also be arranged at extra cost.

Emerge Spa

AYURVEDA

(☎2522500; www.emergespa.co.in; Windflower Spa & Resort, Maharanapratap Rd, Nazarbad) Mysore's spa operations are spearheaded by the slick, out-of-town Emmerge Spa, where you can drop by for a pampering ayurvedic session (try the one-hour Abhayanga massage for ₹1600) or a range of Balinese massage, hydrotherapy and beauty treatments.

Swaasthya Ayurveda Retreat Village

AYURVEDA

(☎6557557, 9448056406; www.swaasthya.com; 69 Bommaru Agrahara; s/d incl full board ₹2000/3000; @) For an exceptionally peaceful and refreshing ayurvedic vacation, head 12km towards Srirangapatnam to this retreat, where you can spend some time in quiet meditation and feel your senses feast on the lush greenery, the aromatic herb gardens, the simple vegetarian food and the

gurgling sounds of the Cauvery River. Daily rates include basic yoga sessions; for specific ayurvedic treatments, there are special packages on offer. Book well in advance.

Indus Valley Ayurvedic Centre AYURVEDA
(☎2473263; www.ayurindus.com; Lalithadripura; s/d incl full board ₹8400/14,090) Set on 16 acres of gardens, this classy centre derives its therapies from ancient scriptures and prescriptions. A wide variety of treatments and basic training programs are on offer. The overnight package includes one session each of ayurveda, yoga and beauty therapy.

Karanji Lake Nature Park BIRDWATCHING
(Indiranagar; admission ₹10, camera/video ₹10/25; ☎8.30am-5.30pm) Next to the zoo, this nature park is the place to spy on various bird species, including great and little cormorants, purple and grey herons, egrets, black ibises, rose-ringed parakeets, green bee-eaters and painted storks, as well as several kinds of butterflies.

Courses Yoga

The following places have put Mysore on the international yoga map. Unlike casual centres, they are all austere committed to the art, and require at least a month's commitment on your part. You'll also need to register far in advance, as they are often booked out. Call or write to the centres for details.

Ashtanga Yoga Research Institute YOGA
(AYRI; ☎9880185500; www.kpjayi.org; 3rd Stage, 235 8th Cross, Gokulam) Founded by the renowned Ashtanga teacher K Pattabhi Jois, who taught Madonna her yoga moves.

Atma Vikasa Centre YOGA
(☎2341978; www.atmavikasayoga.com; Kuvempunagar Double Rd) 'Backbending expert' Yogacharya Venkatesh offers courses in yoga, Sanskrit and meditation. Call in advance to find out if they've already shifted to a new campus 2km away.

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

Music

Jayashankar, the music teacher at **Shruthi Musical Works** (☎9845249518; 1189 3rd Cross,



NO 'TOURISTS', PLEASE

Yoga Institutes, as well as local laws, insist that all visitors arriving in Mysore to train in yoga must do so on a student visa, not a casual tourist visa. You are also required to register yourself at the local police station within 14 days of your arrival.

Irwin Rd; ☎10.30am-9pm Mon-Sat, 10.30am-2pm Sun) gets good reviews for his tabla instructions (₹200 per hour).

Tours

KSTDC runs a daily Mysore city tour (₹175), taking in the entire city, 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 (₹450) on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 7.30am to 9pm. It requires a minimum of 10 people, so call in advance.

There's also a three-day tour of Ooty, Kodaikanal, Doddabetta and Coonoor every Monday, Thursday and Saturday (per person including accommodation is ₹2500) that starts off from Bengaluru; you can join at Mysore. These tours generally run during the high season.

All tours leave from the tours office at **Hotel Mayura Hoysala** (☎2423652; 2 Jhansi Lakshmi Bai Rd). Bookings can be made at the nearby **KSTDC Transport Office** (☎2423652; 2 Jhansi Lakshmi Bai Rd; ☎8.30am-8.30pm) or at travel agencies around town.

Sleeping

Mysore attracts tourists through the year and can fill up very quickly during Dussehra. Booking early is recommended. Check with the tourist office about government-approved homestays, offering rooms from around ₹400 per person.

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

Parklane Hotel

HOTEL \$\$

(☎4003500; www.parklanemysore.com; 2720 Harsha Rd; s/d from ₹900/1200; 🍷🍷) If there's one place in town that can spoil you for a grand a night, this is it. The travellers' central on Mysore's tourist circuit, the Parklane fea-

tures snug and thoughtfully outfitted rooms (even mobile-phone chargers are provided), livened up by motley tilework on the walls and lovely city views framed in sheer-draped windows. The loos are the cleanest you'll find in town. And the restaurant on the first floor is one happy place to be in the evenings.



Mysore Youth Hostel

HOSTEL \$

(☎2544704; www.yhmysore.com; Gangotri Layout; dm from ₹60) Shoestringers take note. This cutie is arguably the nicest hostel in all of India. Set against a patch of green lawns 3km west of town, it's clean, tidy, well-maintained and manned by an extremely professional staff. OK, there's an 11pm curfew, but then, there's also breakfast for ₹25 and dinner for ₹35. An age proof and identity document must be produced when checking in.

Hotel Mayura Hoysala

HOTEL \$

(☎2426160; 2 Jhansi Lakshmi Bai Rd; s/d incl breakfast from ₹800/900; ☹) This government-owned hotel continues to offer its blend of mothballed heritage (lace-lined curtains, heavy wooden doors, assorted cane furniture and old photographs lining its corridors) at affordable prices, and the bar downstairs is popular with Mysore's tippers.

Ginger

HOTEL \$\$

(☎6633333; www.gingerhotels.com; Nazarbad Mohalla; s/d ₹2499/2999; ☹☹) An ultramodern, DIY business hotel, Ginger has slick and comfortable rooms painted in warm orange tones. Endless features such as a gymnasium, wi-fi, a 24-hour cafe, an ATM, snacks dispensers and juice vending machines complement the warm hospitality of its professional staff. The in-house spa offers ayurvedic sessions from ₹1200.

Royal Orchid Metropole

HERITAGE HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎4255566; www.royalorchidhotels.com; 5 Jhansi Lakshmi Bai Rd; s/d incl breakfast from ₹4999/5999; ☹☹☹) Originally built by the Wodeyars to serve as the residence of the Maharaja's British guests, this is Mysore's leading heritage address. A fascinating colonial-era structure with bona fide old-world charm, it has 30 rooms oozing character, and a stay here is spiced up with several add-ons such as occasional magic shows, music concerts, dance recitals, snake charming performances and astrological sessions.

Hotel Maurya Residency

HOTEL \$\$

(☎2523375; www.sangrouphotel.com; Harsha Rd; d from ₹995; ☹☹) Along with Hotel Maurya

Palace, its twin establishment next door, the Maurya Residency remains a trusted name among the Harsha Rd midrange gang. It's a friendly place with well-appointed rooms and ecofriendly directives slapped all around. **Veg Kourt**, the restaurant downstairs, serves a sumptuous all-you-can-eat breakfast for ₹65.

Hotel Dasaprakash

HOTEL \$

(☎2442444; www.mysoredasaprakashgroup.com; Gandhi Sq; s/d from ₹275/520, d with AC ₹1200; ☹) A stalwart in Mysore's hospitality industry, this hotel is particularly popular with local tourists and pilgrim groups. Rooms are well maintained; some get a touch of antiquity with old wooden furniture. However, maintenance may not always be up to expectations. An inexpensive veg restaurant, an ice-cream parlour and an astro-palmist are available within the complex.

Green Hotel

HERITAGE HOTEL \$\$

(☎4255000; www.greenhotelindia.com; 2270 Vinoba Rd; Jayalakshimpuram; s/d incl breakfast from ₹2250/2750) Given you're 3km west of town, you're largely paying for the ambience here, which is more prominent in the themed and moody rooms in the main palace building. Those overlooking the garden are bare, inadequately appointed for the price and sparsely evoke nostalgia.

Pai Vista

HOTEL \$\$

(☎2521111; www.paihotels.com; 35A BN Rd; s/d incl breakfast ₹3000/3500; ☹☹☹) A mint-fresh business hotel smack opposite the bus stand. Rooms and features are on par with any other hotel in its category. There's a pub called **Opi-um** that plays groovy music in the evenings.

Viceroy

HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎2425111; www.theviceroygroup.com; Harsha Rd; s/d from ₹1895/2295; ☹☹) Very competitively priced, The Viceroy continues to stay abreast of the midrange race in town. However, the main reason for checking into one of its comfy rooms is the million-dollar view of the Maharaja's Palace from your window and the rooftop restaurant.



Eating & Drinking

Mysore is well served by Indian restaurants. 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.



Malgudi Café

CAFE \$

(Green Hotel, mains ₹60-80; ☉9.30am-7pm) This ambient cafe set around an inner courtyard

within Green Hotel's main building brews some of the best South Indian coffees and Himalayan teas, coupling them with a number of tasty snacks. It actively promotes the causes of downtrodden communities while generating employment for them – all the attendants here come from underprivileged backgrounds. You can do your bit by ordering a second cuppa.



Pelican Pub

PUB \$

(Hunsur Rd; mains ₹80-100; ☺11am-11pm) A wonderful pub is the Pelican! Whether you love your Ogden Nash or not, you're bound to be one happy soul here. An alfresco-style watering hole located en route to Green Hotel, this laid-back joint serves beer for ₹50 a mug and some sinful pork chilli for ₹110 a platter. Happiness, of course, comes free.

Parklane Hotel

MULTICUISINE \$\$

(Parklane Hotel, 2720 Harsha Rd; mains ₹100-140) Choose from a wide selection of tasty Indian, Continental and Chinese dishes while lounging at one of the Parklane's picnic-style garden tables, lit up moodily by countless lanterns. The indoor seating area allows you to interact with house musicians who play popular Indian and Western tunes on request. A good place to exchange notes with fellow travellers.

Tiger Trail

INDIAN \$\$

(Royal Orchid Metropole, 5 Jhansi Lakshmi Bai Rd; mains ₹180-220) This sophisticated restaurant works up delectable Indian dishes in a courtyard that twinkles with torches and fairy lights at night. The best section on its menu comprises exotic jungle recipes collected from different tiger reserves across India.

Hotel RRR

SOUTH INDIAN \$

(Gandhi Sq; mains ₹50-70) Classic Andhra-style food is ladled out at this ever-busy eatery, and you will likely have to queue for a table during meals. One item to try is the piping-hot veg thali (₹50) served on banana leaves. There's a second branch on Harsha Rd.

Vinayaka Mylari

SOUTH INDIAN \$

(769 Nazarbada Main Rd; mains ₹30-50; ☺7.30am-11.30am & 4-8pm) Local foodies say this is one of the best eateries in town to try local staples such as the *masala dosa* (papery lentil-flour pancakes stuffed with seasonal vegetables) and *idlis* (rice cakes) served with coconut chutney.

Café Aramane

SOUTH INDIAN \$

(Sayyaji Rao Rd, mains ₹40-60; ☺7.30am-10pm) Yet another of Mysore's august establish-

ments, this busy cafe rolls out steaming breakfast platters for Mysore's office-goers, and welcomes them back in the evenings with aromatic filter coffee and a convoy of delicious snacks.

Café Coffee Day

CAFE \$

(CCD; Devaraj Urs Rd; snacks ₹60-90; ☺10am-11pm) Yes, these guys do have a gazillion outlets across India, but few other branches can match this lovely operation in terms of chill factor. The cool terrace sit-out is where you'll find Mysore's college brigade downing their joes with vigour.

Shopping

Mysore is a great place to shop for its famed sandalwood products, silk saris and wooden toys. It is also one of India's major incense-manufacturing centres.

Souvenir and handicraft shops are dotted around Jaganmohan Palace and Dhanvanthri Rd, while silk shops line Devaraj Urs Rd. Look for the butterfly-esque 'Silk Mark' on your purchase; it's an endorsement for quality silk.

Government Silk Factory

CLOTHING

(Mananthody Rd, Ashokapuram; ☺10am-6.30pm Mon-Sat) Given that Mysore's prized silk is made under its very sheds, this is the best and cheapest place to shop for the exclusive textile. Behind the showroom is the factory, where you can drop by between 7.30am and 4pm to see how the fabric is made. There's an **outlet** (☺10.30am-7.30pm Mon-Sat) on KR Circle as well.

Sandalwood Oil Factory

SOUVENIRS

(Ashokapuram; ☺9.30-11am & 2-4pm Mon-Sat) This is a quality-assured place for sandalwood products such as incense, soap, cosmetic products and the prohibitively expensive pure sandalwood oil (₹1350 for 5ml!). Sandalwood is currently in short supply, so prices may escalate further in future. Guided tours are available to show you around the factory, and explain how the products are made.

Cauvery Arts & Crafts

Emporium

CLOTHING

(Sayyaji Rao Rd; ☺10am-7.30pm) Not the cheapest place, but the selection is extensive, the quality is unquestionable and there's no pressure to buy.

Fabindia

CLOTHING

(☎4259009; 451 Jhansi Lakshmi Bai Rd, Chamrajpuram; ☺10am-8pm) A branch of the ever reliable clothing and homewares shop, en route to the silk and sandalwood factories.

Shruthi Musical Works

MUSIC STORE

(1189 3rd Cross, Irwin Rd; ☎10.30am-8pm Mon-Sat) Sells a variety of traditional musical instruments including tabla sets and assorted percussion instruments.

Sapna Book House

BOOKSTORE

(1433 Narayan Shastri Rd; ☎10.30am-8.30pm) A good collection of paperbacks and magazines, along with souvenirs.

i Information**Internet Access**

Benaka Graphics (Sayyaji Rao Rd; per hr ₹20; ☎10.30am-7.30pm) Internet, printing, image burning and photocopying facilities.

KSE Internet (Hotel Ramanashree Complex; BN Rd; per hr ₹30; ☎10am-10pm) Fast internet connections.

Left Luggage

The City bus stand's cloakroom, open from 6am to 11pm, costs ₹10 per bag for 12 hours.

Medical Services

Government Hospital (☎4269806; Dhanvanthri Rd) Has a 24-hour pharmacy.

Money

HDFC Bank (Devaraj Urs Rd) ATM.

ICICI Bank (BN Rd) ATM location, below Hotel Pai Vista.

State Bank of Mysore (cnr Irwin & Ashoka Rds; ☎10.30am-2.30pm & 3-4pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-12.30pm Sat) Changes cash and travellers cheques.

Thomas Cook (☎2420090; Silver Tower, 9/2 Ashoka Rd; ☎9.30am-6pm Mon-Sat) For foreign currency.

Photography

Danthi (44 Devaraj Urs Rd; ☎10am-8pm)

Rekha Colour Lab (142 Dhanvanthri Rd; ☎9am-9.30pm)

Post

DHL (Jhansi Lakshmi Bai Rd; ☎9.30am-8.30pm Mon-Sat)

Main post office (cnr Irwin & Ashoka Rds; ☎10am-6pm Mon-Sat)

Tourist Information

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

KSTDC Transport Office (☎2423652; 2 Jhansi Lakshmi Bai Rd; ☎8.30am-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.

i Getting There & Away**Air**

Mysore's new airport had been freshly commissioned during research, with a solitary Kingfisher flight to Bengaluru (one hour) continuing to Chennai (three hours). **Indian Airlines** (☎2426317; Jhansi Lakshmi Bai Rd; ☎10am-5pm Mon-Sat) has a booking office next to Hotel Mayura Hoysala for flights out of other cities. For booking on other carriers, try **Skyway** (☎2444444; 370/4 Jhansi Lakshmi Bai Rd; ☎10am-6pm Mon-Sat).

Bus

The **Central bus stand** (BN Rd) handles all KSRTC long-distance buses. The **City bus stand** (Sayyaji Rao Rd) is for city, Srirangapatnam and Chamundi Hill buses. KSRTC bus services from

BUSES FROM MYSORE

DESTINATION	FARE (₹)	DURATION (HR)	FREQUENCY
Bandipur	52 (O)	2	4 daily
Bengaluru	136 (R)/217 (V)	3	every 30min
Channarayapatna	56 (O)	2	hourly
Chennai	829 (V)	12	4 daily
Ernakulam	388 (R)/530 (V)	11	4 daily
Gokarna	323 (O)	12	1 daily
Hassan	76 (O)	3	hourly
Hospet	291 (O)	10	4 daily
Mangalore	252 (R)/350 (V)	7	hourly
Ooty	123 (R)/184 (V)	5	8 daily

O – Ordinary, R – Rajahansa Semideluxe, V – Airavath AC Volvo

Mysore include those listed in the boxed text p860.

For Belur, Halebidu or Sravanabelagola, the usual gateway is Hassan. For Hampi, the best transfer point is Hospet.

The **Private bus stand** (Sayyaji Rao Rd) has services to Hubli, Bijapur, Mangalore, Ooty and Ernakulam. You'll find several ticketing agents around the stand.

Train

From Mysore's railway booking office, buy a ticket on the 6.45am *Chamundi Express* or the 11am *Tippu Express* to Bengaluru (2nd class/ chair ₹66/195, three hours). The 2.15 *Shatabdi Express* also connects Bengaluru (chair/executive ₹275/550, two hours) and Chennai (chair/ executive ₹695/1315, seven hours) daily except Tuesday. Several passenger trains to Bengaluru (₹35, 3½ hours), stop at Srirangapatnam (₹15, 20 minutes). The 10.15pm *Mysore Dharwad Express* goes to Hubli (sleeper/2AC ₹206/750, 9½ hours).

i Getting Around

Agencies at hotels and around town rent cabs for about ₹7 per kilometre, with a minimum of 250km per day, plus a daily allowance of ₹150 for the driver.

The flagfall on autorickshaws is ₹15, and ₹7 per kilometre is charged thereafter. Autorickshaws can also be hired along Harsha Rd for a day's sightseeing (₹900).

Around Mysore

SRIRANGAPATNAM

08236

Steeped in bloody history, the fort town of Srirangapatnam, 16km from Mysore, is built on an island straddling the Cauvery River. The seat of Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan's power, this town was the de facto capital of much of southern India during the 18th century. Srirangapatnam's glory days ended when the British waged an epic war against Tipu Sultan in 1799, when he was defeated and killed. However, the ramparts, battlements and some of the gates of the fort still stand, as do a clutch of monuments.

Close to the bus station is a handsome twin-tower mosque built by the sultan. Within the fort walls are the dungeon where Tipu held British officers captive, and the handsome **Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple** (☉7.30am-1pm & 4-8pm). Srirangapatnam's star attraction, however, is Tipu's summer palace, **Daria Daulat Bagh** (Indian/foreigner

₹5/100; ☉9am-5pm), which lies 1km east of the fort. Built largely out of wood, the palace is notable for the lavish decoration covering every inch of its interiors. The ceilings are embellished with floral designs, while the walls bear murals depicting courtly life and Tipu's campaigns against the British. There's a small museum within, which houses several artefacts including a portrait of Tipu Sultan, aged 30, painted by European artist John Zoffany in 1780.

About 2km further east, the remains of Hyder Ali, his wife and Tipu are housed in the impressive onion-domed **Gumbaz** (admission free; ☉8am-8pm), which stands amid serene gardens. Head 500m east of Gumbaz for the river banks to end your trip with a refreshing **coracle ride** (per boat ₹150, 15 min).

Just 3km upstream, the **Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary** (Indian/foreigner ₹25/75, camera/video ₹25/100; ☉8.30am-6pm) is on one of three islands in the Cauvery River. Resident storks, ibises, egrets, spoonbills and cormorants are best seen at dawn or late afternoons on a **boat ride** (per person ₹100).

🛏 Sleeping & Eating

Mayura River View

HOTEL \$\$

(☎252113; d from ₹1750; 📞) How we wish all government hotels were done up like the Mayura River View. Set on a quiet patch of riverbank, its cosy bungalows are custom-made for unwinding in the lap of nature. And the **restaurant** (mains ₹90 to ₹120) has a wonderful sit-out from where you can gaze at the river while guzzling beer.

Royal Retreat New Amblee Holiday Resort

HOTEL \$\$

(☎9845002665; www.ambleeresort.com; d from ₹1200; 📞) A menagerie of rabbits, ducks, turkeys and emus welcome you into the Amblee, which offers relatively good accommodation and a swimming pool to splash in. It has a pleasant riverside setting opposite the River View, and a reasonably priced restaurant that doesn't serve booze (although you can whisk it away to your room).

i Getting There & Away

Take buses 313 or 316 (₹14, one hour) that depart frequently from Mysore's City bus stand. Passenger trains travelling from Mysore to Bengaluru (₹12, 20 minutes) also stop here. The stand for private buses heading to Brindavan

Gardens (₹18, 30 minutes) is just across from Srirangapatnam's main bus stand.

i Getting Around

The sights are a little spread out, but walking isn't out of the question, especially in winter. For a quicker tour, an autorickshaw from Mysore is about ₹400 (three hours).

BRINDAVAN GARDENS

If you're familiar with Bollywood cinema, these ornamental **gardens** (adult/child ₹20/15, camera/video ₹50/100; ☀8am-8.30pm) might give you a sense of déjà vu – they've indeed been the backdrop for many a gyrating musical number. The best time to visit is in the evening, when the fountains are illuminated and made to dance to popular film tunes.

There's no reason to halt a night in the gardens. For a special experience, however, you might consider checking into the swanky **Royal Orchid Brindavan Garden** (☎9945815566; www.royalorchidhotels.com; s/d incl breakfast from ₹4499/4999; 📶📶📶), an enormous luxury hotel perched atop a hill-ock overlooking the gardens. The rooms here are lavishly outfitted, and the strategically-located Elephant Bar is a vantage point from where to view the light-and-sound shows while sipping on your poison.

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 (₹15, 45 minutes).

MELKOTE

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

Three KSRTC buses shuttle daily between Mysore and Melkote (₹45, 1½ hours).

SOMNATHPUR

The astonishingly beautiful **Keshava Temple** (Indian/foreigner ₹5/100; ☀8.30am-5.30pm) is one of the finest examples of Hoysala architecture, on par with the masterpieces of Belur and Halebid. Built in 1268, this star-shaped temple, 33km from Mysore, is adorned with superb stone sculptures depicting various scenes from the Ramayana, Mahabharata and Bhagavad Gita, and the life and times of the Hoysala kings.

On a tree in the temple grounds there's a red postbox, where prestamped mail posted by you will be collected by the local post office and marked with a special postmark bearing the temple's image – this is a great memento to send back home.

Somnathpur is 12km south of Bannur and 10km north of Tirumakudal Narsipur. Take one of the half-hourly buses from Mysore to either village (₹15, 30 minutes) and change there.

WORTH A TRIP

GO FISH

Game for some fishy gambolling? Then you're in luck. About 75km from Mysore, strung along the densely forested banks of the quiet-flowing Cauvery River, are the picturesque fishing camps of **Bheemeshwari**, **Galibore** and **Doddamakali**, teeming with their resident populations of carp, catfish and the venerable mahseer. Anglers are fast converging from around the world to hook these 45kg-plus beasts who (going by the trophy shots displayed in the dining hall) often seem to match their human captors in size. All fishing is on a catch-and-release policy. There's some equipment on hire, but get your own tackles, if possible.

Non-anglers, meanwhile, can engage in kayaking, coracle rides, biking or ayurveda sessions. Of the three camps, Bheemeshwari is the most developed in terms of facilities, and more easily accessible.

Accommodation is in a choice of ecofriendly cottages (per person incl full board Indian/foreigner from ₹2500/€70) operated by **Jungle Lodges & Resorts** (Map p844; ☎080-25597944; www.junglelodges.com; Shrunagar Shopping Complex, MG Rd, Bengaluru; ☀10am-5.30pm Mon-Sat). Book in Bengaluru or online.

The best way to reach the camps is by taxi. Drive past Malavalli, before turning right at Sathanur. It's 23km from here to Bheemeshwari. Resort jeeps connect the other camps from here.

SIVASAMUDRAM

About 60km east of Mysore is Sivasamudram, home to the twin waterfalls of Barachukki and Gaganachukki. The site of India's first hydroelectric project (1902), it's a place where you can spend a quiet time while indulging in natural bounties.

A few kilometres away is Hebbani village, where the affable Hatherell couple and their 10 dogs run the relaxing **Georgia Sunshine Village** (☎9448110660; www.georgiasunshine.com; d incl full board from ₹5000; 🍷🍷), a superb family getaway with accommodation in cosy bungalows, a sparkling swimming pool and delicious homemade food. Treks and fishing trips can be arranged on request.

Frequent buses run from Mysore (₹30, one hour) to Malavalli, 14km away. The Hatherells can arrange an autorickshaw pick-up for ₹150. Call well in advance.

Hassan

☎08172 / POP 133,200

With a good range of hotels, a railroad and other conveniences, Hassan is a handy base for exploring Belur (38km), Halebid (33km) and Sravanabelagola (48km). Situated close to Mysore and Bengaluru, it's a bustling town with friendly people.

Sleeping

**Hoysala Village Resort** HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎256764; www.hoysalavillageresorts.com; Belur Rd; cottage incl full board ₹6300; 🍷🍷) Located 6km from town on the road to Belur, this fantastic getaway is set amid a patch of manicured gardens, tucked around which are comfy cottages with large windows looking onto palms and hedges. There's a treehouse where you can laze away the evening, beer in hand, or flex your pectorals in the aqua-blue pool. And the food at the **restaurant** adjoining the reception area is scrummy to boot. The resort also has an ayurvedic massage centre; sessions kick off from around ₹700.

Hotel Suvarna Regency HOTEL \$\$

(☎266774; www.suvarnaregencyhotel.com; BM Rd; d from ₹750; 🍷🍷) This place, just south of Gandhi Sq, is frequented by business people, and is one of Hassan's trusted oldies. It's often bulk-booked by organisers of conferences and conventions, so call early. The rooms are comfy, though dated in terms of decor.

Jewel Rock

HOTEL \$

(☎261048; BM Rd; d from ₹700; 🍷) Close to the train station, this place is an absolute steal. The spacious rooms, with floral curtains, are comfortable and well-kept. Raucous private parties are often thrown by locals in the banquet hall downstairs; hopefully, you'll be checking in on a quieter day.

Hotel Hassan Ashhok

HOTEL \$\$

(☎268731; www.hassanashok.com; BM Rd; s/d from ₹3000/3350; 🍷🍷) Clearly the classiest of Hassan's city options, this elegantly designed hotel offers you all the requisite luxe features, baskets full of herbal toiletries in the showers and plenty of fluffy white pillows to crash on. The **restaurant** works up a good range of Indian dishes, including a jumbo kebab platter (₹350).

Hotel Sri Krishna

HOTEL \$

(☎263240; BM Rd; s/d ₹350/725, d with AC ₹975; 🍷) Hugely popular with local tourists, this place has biggish rooms done up in red-and-black checks, and large windows. There's a quality veg **restaurant** (mains ₹40 to ₹60) downstairs. Book well in advance.



Eating

Suvarna Gate

MULTICUISINE \$\$

(Hotel Suvarna Regency, BM Rd; mains ₹90-130; ☉noon-3.30pm & 6.30-11.30pm) Located to the rear of Hotel Suvarna Regency, this classy eatery tosses up some excellent Indian, Chinese and Continental mainstays - the chicken tandoori masala is particularly delicious.

Mayur

INDIAN \$\$

(Hotel Jewel Rock, BM Rd; mains ₹80-110; ☉noon-3pm & 7-11pm) Hungry crowds flock to this eatery every evening for its lip-smacking South Indian as well as North Indian nonveg fare. The staff are patient and polite.

Hotel GRR

SOUTH INDIAN \$

(Bus Stand Rd; mains ₹30-60; ☉11am-11pm) Top-of-the-line Andhra-style thalis (₹35) and a popular chicken biryani (₹60) personify this grubby joint next to the bus stand.



Information

The train station is 2km east of town on Bengaluru-Mangalore (BM) Rd. The Central bus stand is on the corner of AVK College and Bus Stand Rds. The helpful **tourist office** (☎268862; AVK College Rd; ☉10am-5.30pm Mon-Sat) is 100m east of the bus stand. SBI and HDFC Bank have ATMs on BM Rd, but change foreign currency in Bengaluru or Mysore. There's an internet cafe (per hr ₹20) below Hotel Suvarna Regency.

i Getting There & Away

Bus

Starting from 6am, buses leave the Central bus stand hourly for Halebid (₹18, one hour) and Belur (₹23, one hour). The last buses back from both places are around 8pm.

To get to Sravanabelagola, you must take one of the many buses to Channarayapatna (₹25, 45 minutes) and change there.

There are frequent services to Mysore (₹76, three hours), Bengaluru (semiduluxe/duluxe ₹179/246, four hours) and Mangalore (₹166, five hours).

Taxi

Taxi drivers hang out on AVK College Rd, north of the bus stand. A day tour of Belur and Halebid or Sravanabelagola will cost you about ₹1000. Firmly set the price before departure.

Train

From the well-organised **train station**, three passenger trains head to Mysore daily (2nd class ₹120, three hours). For Bengaluru, take the 1.30am Yeshvantpur Express (sleeper ₹140, 5½ hours).

Belur & Halebid

📍08177 / ELEV 968M

Along with Somnathpur, the Hoysala temples at Halebid (also known as Halebeedu) and Belur (also called Beluru) are the apex of one of the most artistically exuberant periods of ancient Hindu cultural development. Architecturally, they are South India's answer to Khajuraho in Madhya Pradesh and Konark near Puri in Odisha (Orissa).

Only 16km lie between Belur and Halebid, and the towns are connected by frequent shuttle buses from 6.30am to 7pm (₹20, 40 minutes). See p863 for details of buses to/from Hassan. To get to Hampi, it's best to return to Bengaluru via Hassan and take an overnight bus to Hospet.

BELUR

The **Channakeshava Temple** (Temple Rd; ☉dawn-dusk) was commissioned in 1116 to commemorate the Hoysalas' victory over the neighbouring Cholas. It took more than a century to build, and is currently the only one among the three major Hoysala sites still in daily use – try to be there for the ritual *puja* ceremonies at 9am, 3pm and 7.30pm. Some parts of the temple, such as the exterior lower friezes, were not sculpted to completion and are thus less elaborate than those of the other Hoysala temples.

However, the work higher up is unsurpassed in detail and artistry, and is a glowing tribute to human skill. Particularly intriguing are the angled bracket figures depicting women in ritual dancing poses. While the front of the temple is reserved for images depicting erotic sections from the Kama Sutra, the back is strictly for gods. The roof of the inner sanctum is held up by rows of exquisitely sculpted pillars, no two of which are identical in design.

Scattered around the temple complex are other smaller temples, a marriage hall which is still used and the seven-storey *gopuram*, which has sensual sculptures explicitly portraying the activities of dancing girls.

Guides can be hired for ₹150; they help to bring some of the sculptural detail to life.

Hotel Mayura Velapuri (📍222209; Kempegowda Rd; d from ₹900; 🌞), a state-run hotel gleaming with post-renovation glory, is located on the way to the temple, and is the best place to camp in Belur. The restaurant-bar serves a variety of Indian dishes and snacks (₹70 to ₹90) to go with beer.

Near Kempegowda's statue is **Shankar Hotel** (Temple Rd; mains ₹35; ☉7am-9.30pm), a busy place serving fine South Indian thalis, *masala dosas*, Indian sweets, snacks and drinks.

HALEBID

Construction of the **Hoysaleswara Temple** (☉dawn-dusk), Halebid's claim to fame, began around 1121 and went on for more than 80 years. It was never completed, but nonetheless stands today as a masterpiece of Hoysala architecture. The interior of its inner sanctum, chiselled out of black stone, is marvellous. On the outside, the temple's richly sculpted walls are covered with a flurry of Hindu deities, sages, stylised animals and friezes depicting the life of the Hoysala rulers. A huge statue of Nandi (Shiva's bull) sits to the left of the main temple, facing the inner sanctum. Guides are available to show you around for ₹150; the shoekeeper expects a wee tip for holding your shoes when you enter the temple.

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

If the pesky touts get on your nerves, take some time out to visit the nearby, smaller **Kedareswara Temple**, or a little-visited enclosure containing three **Jain** temples about 500m away, which also have fine carvings.

If you're stuck in Halebid for the night, the tidy rooms at **Hotel Mayura Shanthala** (☎273224; d ₹350), set around a leafy garden opposite the temple complex, is an OK fallback option.

Pravaraabelagola

☎08176

Atop the bald rock of Vindhya giri 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 Pravaraabelagola. Viewing the statue close up is the main reason for heading to this sedate town, whose name means 'Monk of the White Pond'.

👁 Sights

Gomateshvara Statue MONUMENT (Bahubali; ☎6.30am-6.30pm) A steep climb up 614 steps takes you to the top of Vindhya giri Hill, the summit of which is lorded over by the towering naked statue of Gomateshvara. Commissioned by a military commander in the service of the Ganga king Rachamalla and carved out of a single piece of granite by the sculptor Aristenemi in AD 981, its serenity and simplicity is in stark contrast to the Hoysala sites at Belur and Halebid.

Bahubali was the son of emperor Vrishabhadeva, who later became the first Jain *tirthankar* (revered teacher) Adinath. Embroiled in fierce competition with his brother Bharatha to succeed his father, Bahubali realised the futility of material gains and renounced his kingdom. As a recluse, he meditated in complete stillness in the forest until he attained enlightenment. His lengthy meditative spell is denoted by vines curling around his legs and an ant hill at his feet.

Leave shoes at the foot of the hill, but it's fine to wear socks. If you want it easy, you can hire a *dholi* (portable chair) with bearers for ₹400, from 6.30am to 11.30pm and 3.30pm to 6pm.

Every 12 years, millions flock here to attend the **Mastakabhisheka** ceremony, when the statue is doused in holy waters, pastes, powders, precious metals and stones. The next ceremony is slated for 2018.

Temples

JAIN TEMPLES

Apart from the Bahubali statue, there are several interesting Jain temples in town. The **Chandragupta Basti** (Chandragupta Com-

munity; ☎6am-6pm), on Chandragiri Hill opposite Vindhya giri, is believed to have been built by Emperor Ashoka. The **Bhandari Basti** (Bhandari Community; ☎6am-6pm), in the southeast corner of town, is Pravaraabelagola's largest temple. Nearby, **Chandranatha Basti** (Chandranatha Community; ☎6am-6pm) has well-preserved paintings depicting Jain tales.

🍽 Sleeping & Eating

The local Jain organisation **SDJMI** (☎257258; d/tr ₹135/160) handles bookings for its 15 guesthouses. The office is behind the Vidyananda Nilaya Dharamsala, past the post office.

Hotel Raghu

HOTEL \$

(☎257238; d from ₹500; 🍽) This is the only privately owned hotel around, and offers basic but clean rooms. The real bonus is its vegetarian **restaurant** (☎6am-9pm) downstairs, which works up an awesome veg thali (₹50), served with care by the staff and sometimes the owner himself.

📍 Getting There & Away

There are no direct buses from Pravaraabelagola to Hassan or Belur – you must go to Channarayapatna (₹15, 20 minutes) and catch an onward connection there. Four daily buses run direct to Bengaluru (₹92, 3½ hours) and Mysore (₹56, 2½ hours). Long-distance buses clear out before 3pm. If you miss these, catch a local bus to Channarayapatna and change there.

Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve

The pristine forests of the **Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve** are one of India's best-preserved wildernesses, and span about 5500 sq km across the states of Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Human access to the reserve is through a number of national parks, such as Wayanad (see p972) in Kerala and Mudumalai (see p1059) in Tamil Nadu. In Karnataka, the best access points are Bandipur and Nagarhole, with the super-green forested region around the Kabini Lake boasting some of the top wildlife camps in the region.

Home to over 100 species of mammals and some 350 species of birds, the reserve is also a natural habitat for the prized but endangered Bengal tigers and Asiatic elephants; more than a fifth of the world's population of jumbos live here.

BANDIPUR NATIONAL PARK

About 80km south of Mysore on the Ooty road, the **Bandipur National Park** (Indian/foreigner ₹75/175, video ₹100) covers 880 sq km and was once the Mysore maharajas' private wildlife reserve. The park is noted for its herds of gaurs (Indian bison), chitals (spotted deer), sambars, panthers, sloth bears and langurs, as well as tigers and elephants. However, unrestricted traffic hurtling down the highway cutting through the forest has made animals wary of venturing close to safari areas.

Brief **elephant rides** (per person ₹100) are available for a minimum of four people. For a **safari** (per person Indian/foreigner ₹75/175; ☀6.30am, 8.30am, 3.30pm & 5.30pm) there's the forest department's rumbling minibus, noisy enough to put off shy creatures. Resort vehicles are permitted to go into the forest; they are quieter and thus a better bet.



Sleeping & Eating



Bandipur Safari Lodge CAMPGROUND \$\$\$ (Mysore-Ooty Rd; person incl full board Indian/foreigner ₹3000/€70; ☀) Located on the fringes of the park is this largish government-owned ecotourism camp that offers luxurious but low-impact accommodation in well-maintained cottages. Rates include a safari, guided nature walks, entry fees and camera fees, and there are good Indian and Continental buffets for meals.

Tusker Trails CAMPGROUND \$\$\$ (☎080-23618024, 09845326467; per person incl full board Indian/foreigner ₹3000/4200; ☀) A lovely camp located on the eastern edge of the park, this place provides accommodation in simple huts backed by the forest. There's good food and an inviting pool. Rates include one daily safari, trekking with local guides, wildlife documentary screenings and a bonfire.



Getting There & Away

Buses between Mysore and Ooty will drop you at Bandipur (₹55, three hours). You can also book an overnight taxi from Mysore (about ₹2000).

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 ₹50/150), pronounced *nag-ar-hole-eh*. The lush forests here are home to tigers, leopards, elephants, gaurs, muntjacs (barking deer), wild dogs, bonnet macaques and common langurs. The park can remain closed

for long stretches between July and October, when the rains transform the forests into a giant slush-pit.

The park's main entrance is 93km south-west of Mysore. If you're not staying at a resort nearby, the only way to see the park is on the forest department's bus **tour** (per person ₹100; ☀6-8am & 3-5.30pm). The best time to view wildlife is during summer (April to May), though winter (November to February) is kinder.

Decent sleeping options are limited in Nagarhole; you're better off in Kabini Lake. An OK place to camp is **Jungle Inn** (☎08222-246022; www.jungleinn.in; Hunsur-Nagarhole Rd; per head incl full board Indian/foreigner from ₹1800/US\$60) about 35km from the park reception on the Hunsur road. With a welcoming atmosphere, evening campfires and simple, clean rooms, it also serves good organic food. Rates for safaris are extra.

KABINI LAKE

About 70km south of Mysore lies **Kabini Lake**, a giant forest-edged reservoir formed by the damming of the Kabini River. Endowed with rich and unspoilt vegetation, the area has rapidly grown to become one of Karnataka's best wildlife getaways. Positioned midway between the animal corridors of Bandipur and Nagarhole, the Kabini forests are also the habitat for a large variety of wildlife, and give you the chance to view the animals up close.

Tourism around Kabini is managed by a few resorts, most of which are founded on ecofriendly principles. Jungle safaris and other activities such as boat rides and bird-watching are conducted by the resorts, generally between 6.30am to 9.30am, and 4pm to 7pm.



Sleeping & Eating



Kabini River Lodge CAMPGROUND \$\$\$ (☎08228-264402; per person (Indian) incl full board tents//cottages ₹3750/4500/5250, per foreigner (flat rate) €120; ☀) Rated consistently among the world's best wildlife getaways, this fascinating government-run luxury ecocamp is located on the serene, tree-lined grounds of the former Mysore maharaja's hunting lodge beside Kabini Lake. Promising an opulent yet idyllic experience, this showcase resort has hosted countless celebrities (Goldie Hawn is apparently an ardent fan) from around the world. Manned by an excellent staff, it offers accommodation in a choice of large canvas tents, regular rooms

and cottages. Rates include safaris, boat rides and forest entry fees. Book through **Jungle Lodges & Resorts Ltd** (Map p844; ☎080-25597944; www.junglelodges.com; Shrunagar Shopping Complex, MG Rd, Bengaluru; ☀10am-5.30pm Mon-Sat).



Cicada Kabini

CAMPGROUND \$\$\$

(☎080-41152200,9945602305;www.cicadaresorts.com; d incl full board ₹13,000; 🍷🍷🍷) Another highly recommended ecoresort, this well-conceived luxury option brings a dash of contemporary chic to the lakeside. The resort devotes itself to minimising environmental depletion while promoting rural empowerment. Rates are for accommodation and meals only; safaris (Indian/foreigner ₹750/1000) and kayaks and pedal boats (₹100) are extra.

Getting There & Away

A few buses depart daily from Mysore and can drop you at Kabini village. However, it's better to have your own taxi. Enquire with the resorts while making a booking.

Kodagu (Coorg) Region

Nestled amid ageless hills that line the southernmost edge of Karnataka is the luscious Kodagu (Coorg) region, gifted with emerald landscapes and acres of plantations. A major centre for coffee and spice production, this rural expanse is also home to the unique Kodava race, believed to have descended from migrating Persians and Kurds or perhaps Greeks left behind from Alexander the Great's armies. The uneven terrain and cool climate make it a fantastic area for trekking, birdwatching or lazily ambling down little-trod paths winding around carpeted hills. All in all, Kodagu is rejuvenation guaranteed.

The best season for trekking is October to March. Guides are available for hire and can arrange food, transport and accommodation; see p866. Treks can last from a day to a week; the most popular routes are to the peaks of Tadiyendamol (1745m) and Pushpagiri (1712m), and to smaller Kotebetta. Adventure activities are conducted between November and May; the rest of the year is too wet for traipsing around.

Kodagu was a state in its own right until 1956, when it merged with Karnataka. The region's chief town and transport hub is Madikeri, but for an authentic Kodagu experience, you have to venture into the plantations. Avoid weekends, when places can

quickly get filled up by weekenders from Bengaluru.

MADIKERI (MERCARA)

☎08272 / POP 32,400 / ELEV 1525M

Also known as Mercara, this congested market town is spread out along a series of ridges. The only reason for coming here is to organise treks or sort out the practicalities of travel. The Huthri festival, which falls sometime between November and December, is a nice time to visit.

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

Sights

Madikeri's **fort**, now the municipal headquarters, was built in 1812 by Raja Lingarajendra II. There's an old church here, housing a quirky **museum** (admission free; ☀10am-5.30pm Tue-Sun) displaying dusty, poorly labelled artefacts. Panoramic views of the hills and valleys can be savoured from **Raja's Seat** (MG Rd; ☀5.30am-7.30pm). 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 ₹200 return.



Activities

TREKKING

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

Veteran guides Raja Shekhar and Ganesh at **V-Track** (☎229102, 229974; Crown Towers, College Rd; ☀10am-2pm & 4.30-8pm Mon-Sat) can arrange one- to 10-day treks including guide, accommodation and food. Rates are around ₹750 per person per day, and can vary depending on the duration and number of people. For long treks, trips on obscure routes or big groups, it's best to give a week's notice.

Coorg Trails (☎9886665459; www.coorgtrails.com; Main Rd; ☀9am-8.30pm) is another recommended outfit that can arrange day treks around Madikeri for ₹500 per person, and a 22km trek to Kotebetta, including an overnight stay in a village, for ₹1500 per person.



Coorg Planters' Camp

OUTDOOR ADVENTURE

(☎080-41159270; www.coorgplanterscamp.com) Located in Kirudale, 25km from Madikeri, Coorg Planters' Camp is a fantastic ecoresort

featuring tented accommodation, which offers activities such as coffee plantation tours, trekking, birdwatching and nature walks through dense forests. However, large-scale renovation was on during research, and it appeared like the resort would only open sometime in early 2012. Hopefully, the wait will have been worth it.

Ayurjeevan

AYURVEDA

(Kohinoor Rd; ☎9am-6pm) Ayurjeevan, a short walk from ICICI Bank, offers a whole range of rejuvenating ayurvedic packages, with 30-minute sessions kicking off at around ₹400.

Sleeping

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

Hotel Mayura Valley View

HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎228387; near Raja's Seat; d incl breakfast from ₹1200; ☎) Despite being located out of town on a secluded hilltop past Raja's Seat, this is clearly Madikeri's best sleeping option. It has large bright rooms with fantastic views of the valley outside its floor-to-ceiling windows. Service – though patchy – could be bettered for a small tip. The all-new **restaurant-bar** (mains ₹70 to ₹100, open 7am to 10pm) with a terrace overlooking the valley is the coolest place for a drink.

Hotel Hill View

HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎223808; Hill Rd; d from ₹950) Situated at a far corner of the new town, this cosy hotel has small but well-kept rooms. The wall shades and the pruned hedges in the tiny sit-outs are perfectly colour coordinated with the green hills that overlook the rooms. Tours and bonfires can be arranged on request.

Hotel Chitra

HOTEL \$

(☎225372; www.hotelchitra.net; School Rd; d from ₹600) A short walk off Madikeri's main traffic intersection is this austere hotel, providing low-cost, no-frills yet good-value rooms. The sheets are clean and service is efficient, which – coupled with its mid-town location – makes it a good budget option.

Hotel Cauvery

HOTEL \$

(☎225492; School Rd; s/d ₹350/800) This geriatric hotel has just been given a facelift, and promises a rather unique mix of hospitality. The rooms are the same old holes, with a vivid sapphire blue livening up most walls. There's printed floral upholstery on the sturdy

beds, while the corridors outside have plastic creepers lining them. If kitsch is your thing, this might be your kind of place.

Hotel Coorg International

HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎228071; www.coorginternational.com; Convent Rd; s/d incl half-board from ₹3500/4500; ☎☎) Madikeri's classiest option boasts a clean pool, a casual bar, a good multicuisine restaurant, a health club and – most importantly – comfortable rooms with bright upholstery and large windows. Rates include fixed-menu breakfast and dinner and snacks through the day.

Eating

Coorg Cuisinette

INDIAN \$

(Main Rd; mains ₹70-90; ☎noon-4pm & 6.30-10pm) Climb two flights up a commercial building by the main road to feast on endless Kodava specialities at this eatery. Some unique local dishes, such as *pandhi barthadh* (pork dry fry) and *kadambuttu* (rice dumplings) can make your day at the first bite.

Hotel Capitol

INDIAN \$

(School Rd; mains ₹70-90; ☎7am-9.30pm) Don't mind the shabby interiors – the locals certainly don't. All they care about is the great food that comes out of its kitchen, including the flavourful and spicy *pandhi* (pork) curry, best had with a pint of cold beer.

Athithi

SOUTH INDIAN \$

(mains ₹30-50; ☎7am-10pm) Lap it all up like a local at this busy pedestrian eatery, which serves a hot and tasty veg thali (₹45), followed by fruit salads, juices and shakes.

Popular Guru Prasad

SOUTH INDIAN \$

(Main Rd; mains ₹30-40; ☎7am-10pm) A hearty range of veggie options, including a value-for-money veg thali (₹40) and breakfast snacks are ever popular with diners here.

Information

A semi-functional **KSTDC Office** (☎228580; near Raja's Seat; ☎10am-5.30pm Mon-Sat) offers basic tourist information about the region. If you need to change money, try **State Bank of India** (☎229959; College Rd; ☎10.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri). There's an internet cafe on Kohinoor Rd, opposite Ayurjeevan.

Getting There & Away

Seven deluxe buses a day depart from the **KSRTC bus stand** for Bengaluru (₹355, six hours), stopping in Mysore (₹165, three hours) en route. Deluxe buses go to Mangalore (₹170, three hours, three daily), while frequent ordinary

buses head to Hassan (₹80, three hours) and Shimoga (₹175, eight hours).

i Getting Around

Madikeri is a small town easy to negotiate on foot. For excursions around the region, several places rent out motorcycles for around ₹350 a day, with an initial refundable deposit of ₹500. Try **Spice's Mall** (opposite KSRTC bus stand) or **Coorg the Guide** (Chethana Complex). Carry your driver's licence, tank up on petrol and off you go!

THE PLANTATIONS

Spread around Madikeri are Kodagu's quaint and leafy spice and coffee plantations. Numerous estates here offer homestays, ranging from basic to quite luxurious, while high-end resorts have begun to spring up recently. The following are our pick of places within easy reach of Madikeri. Unless otherwise mentioned, rates include meals and trekking guides. Advance bookings should be made. Some options remain closed during the monsoons. Most arrange transport to/from Madikeri; enquire while booking.

TOP CHOICE **Green Hills Estate** HERITAGE HOTEL \$\$
(☎08274-254790; www.neemranahotels.com; Virajpet; r incl breakfast from ₹3000) Coorg's venerable old lady, carrying a burden of heritage on its back. A quaint planter's bungalow designed by a Swiss architect, this estate sits amid emerald plantations halfway between Madikeri and Kakkabe, with an air of nostalgia perpetually hanging heavy within its portals. Stacks of family memorabilia fill up its rosewood panelled interiors, and the rooms have quirky names such as Lord Jim and

i

SPICE OF LIFE

If you have space in your bag, remember to pick up some local spices and natural produce from Madikeri's main market. There's a whole range of spices on offer at the shops lining the streets, including vanilla, nutmeg, lemongrass, pepper and cardamom, as well as the unbranded aromatic coffee that comes in from plantations. Look out for fruit juices and squashes, homemade wines, bottles of fresh wild honey sourced from the forests and packets of ready-made curry masala to flavour your dishes back home. Most items cost between ₹80 to ₹200.

Lady Madcap, supposedly named after racing thoroughbreds once owned by the planter's family. Lunch and dinner are ₹350 each.



Rainforest Retreat

HOSTEL \$

(☎08272-265636; www.rainforesttours.com; Galibeedu; s/d incl full board from ₹1500/2000) A nature-soaked NGO and refuge located on an organic plantation, the Rainforest Retreat devotes itself to exploring organic and ecofriendly ways of life. Organic farming, sustainable agriculture and waste management are catchphrases here, and the hosts (who are a font of regional knowledge) can sufficiently enlighten you about their progressive projects through your stay. Accommodation is in tents and eco-chic cottages with solar power. Activities include plantation tours, birdwatching and treks, among others.

Golden Mist

HOSTEL \$

(☎08272-265629; www.golden-mist.net; Galibeedu; per person incl full board from ₹1500) A German-owned organic plantation, this is one of the nicest options near Madikeri town. Choose between its loft-style family cottage or individual rooms, and treat yourself to some fantastic rustic veg and nonveg food made from the farm's organic produce. Similar in atmosphere to Rainforest Retreat, it offers nature walks and plantation tours.

Alath-Cad Estate Bungalow

HOSTEL \$

(☎08274-252190; www.alathcadcoorg.com; Ammathi; d incl breakfast from ₹2300) A family estate set on a 26-hectare coffee plantation 28km from Madikeri, this is another good place to yield to unadulterated nature. Activities include plantation tours, trekking, fishing, birdwatching and even cooking classes. Accommodation is in simple but snugly done-up cottages, and there's a gracious family playing host.

Kadkani

HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎08274-254186; www.kadkani.com; Ammathi; d incl full board from ₹6500; ☎☎) An ultraluxurious retreat nestled in a dale amid silent forests by the Cauvery River, Kadkani effortlessly matches the best of modern comforts and rustic charm in its classy and plush ecocottages. An excellent place to unwind in style, with a 9-hole golf course and other activities such as river crossing, rafting and trekking thrown in. The evenings are reserved for listening to the cicadas.

KAKKABE

📍08272

About 40km from Madikeri, the village of Kakkabe is an ideal base to plan an assault on Kodagu's highest peak, Tadiyendamol. At the bottom of the summit, 3km from Kakkabe, is the picturesque **Nalakunad Palace** (admission free; ☀️9am-5pm), the restored hunting lodge of a Kodagu king dating from 1794. Within walking distance are several excellent places to camp.

Misty Woods (📍238561; www.coorgmisty.com; cottages from ₹3500), immediately uphill from Nalakunad Palace across a cascading waterfall, aptly complements the dreamy landscape that surrounds it. The tiled red-brick cottages adhering to *vastu shastra* (ancient science similar to Feng Shui) norms are both comfortable and stylish. Meals are extra.

Honey Valley Estate (📍238339; www.honeyvalleyindia.in; d from ₹800) is a wonderful place 1250m above sea level where you can wake to a chirpy dawn and cool, fresh air. The owners' friendliness, ec mindedness and scrumptious organic food make things even better. Advance bookings are essential.

Regular buses run to Kakkabe from Madikeri (₹25, 1½ hours) and from Virajpet (₹18, one hour).

DUBARE FOREST RESERVE

En route to Kushalnagar, Kodagu's second-largest town, is the Dubare Forest Reserve on the banks of the Cauvery River, where a team of elephants retired from forest department work live on pension. Cross the river (₹25) to participate in an **elephant interaction program** (Indian/foreigner ₹270/550; ☀️8.30-10.30am), when you can bathe, feed and then ride the jumbos.

Bookings can be made through **Jungle Lodges & Resorts Ltd** (Map p844; 📞080-25597944; www.junglelodges.com; Shrungar Shopping Complex, MG Rd, Bengaluru; ☀️10am-5.30pm Mon-Sat), which also runs the reserve's rustic but good **Dubare Elephant Camp** (📞9449599755; per person incl full board Indian/foreigner ₹2400/€70). Rates include the elephant-interaction program.

White-water rafting (per person ₹400) is also run from here, over an 8km stretch that features rapids up to grade IV.

BYLAKUPPE

📍08223

Tiny Bylakuppe, 5km southeast of Kushalnagar, was among the first refugee camps set up in South India to house thousands of Tibetans who fled from Tibet following the

1959 Chinese invasion. Comprising several clusters of settlements amid 1200 hectares of rolling sugarcane fields that rustle in the breeze, it has all the sights and sounds of a Tibetan colony, with resident maroon-and-yellow-robed monks and locals selling Tibetan food and handicrafts. The atmosphere is heart-warmingly welcoming. The settlement is also home to much festivity during the Tibetan New Year celebrations.

Foreigners are not allowed to stay overnight in Bylakuppe without a Protected Area Permit (PAP) from the Ministry of Home Affairs in Delhi. Contact the **Tibet Bureau Office** (📞26474798, 26439745; 10B Ring Rd, Lajpat Nagar IV, New Delhi) for details.

The area's highlight is the **Namdroling Monastery** (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 at its dramatic best when school is in session and it rings out with gongs, drums and chanting of hundreds of young novices. You're welcome to sit and meditate; 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, where you'll find the simple **Paljor Dhargey Ling Guest House** (📞258686; pdguesthouse@yahoo.com; d from ₹280).

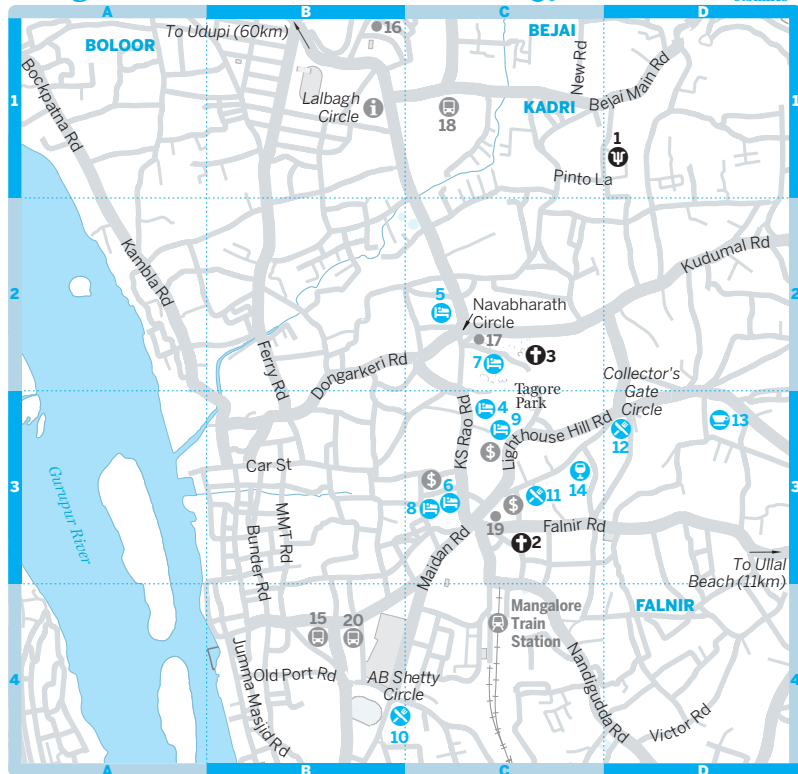
In the same shopping centre is **Shanti Family Restaurant** (mains ₹50-70; ☀️7am-9.30pm), offering a decent range of Indian meals and Tibetan dishes such as *momos* (dumplings) and *thukpa* (noodle soup).

Autorickshaws (shared/solo ₹10/50) ply to Bylakuppe from Kushalnagar. Buses frequently do the 34km run to Kushalnagar from Madikeri (₹30, 1½ hour) and Hassan (₹86, four hours). Most buses on the Mysore-Madikeri route stop at Kushalnagar.

KARNATAKA COAST**Mangalore**

📍0824 / POP 539,300

Relaxed Mangalore sits at the estuaries of the picturesque Netravathi and Gurupur Rivers on the Arabian Sea coast. A major pit stop on international trade routes since the 6th century AD, it's the largest city on Karnataka's shoreline, and a nice place to break long-haul journeys along the western seaboard, or branch inland towards Bengaluru.



Once the main port of Hyder Ali's kingdom, Mangalore now ships out a bulk of the region's spice, coffee and cashew crops from the modern port, 10km north of the city. The city has a pleasant cosmopolitan air and, with a sprinkling of merry pubs and restaurants, makes for a relaxing stay.

Mangalore is hilly, with winding, disorienting and frenzied streets. Luckily, most hotels and restaurants, the bus stand and the train station are centrally located. The KSRTC bus stand is 3km to the north.

Sights

Ullal Beach

BEACH

The ace up Mangalore's sleeve is serene Ullal Beach, a stretch of dazzling golden sands about an hour's drive south of town. It's best enjoyed from Summer Sands Beach Resort. An autorickshaw is ₹200 one way, or the frequent bus 44A (₹10) from the City bus stand will drop you right outside the gate.

St Aloysius College Chapel

CHURCH

(Lighthouse Hill; ☎8.30am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon & 2-6pm Sun) Catholicism's roots in Mangalore date back to the arrival of the Portuguese in the early 1500s, and the city is liberally dotted with churches. One of the most impressive is the Sistine Chapel-like St Aloysius chapel, with its walls and ceilings painted with brilliant frescoes. Also worth checking out is the imposing Roman-style **Milagres Church** (Falnir Rd; ☎8.30am-6pm) in the city centre.

Sultan's Battery

FORT

(Sultan Battery Rd; ☎6am-6pm) The only remnant of Tipu Sultan's fort is 4km from the city centre on the headland of the old port; bus 16 will get you there.

Kadri Manjunatha Temple

HINDU TEMPLE

(Kadri; ☎6am-1pm & 4-8pm) This Kerala-style temple houses a 1000-year-old bronze statue of Lokeshwara.

Mangalore

Sights

- 1 Kadri Manjunatha Temple D1
- 2 Milagres Church C3
- 3 St Aloysius College Chapel C2

Sleeping

- 4 Hotel Manorama C3
- 5 Hotel Ocean Pearl C2
- 6 Hotel Poonja International C3
- 7 Hotel Shaan Plaza C2
- 8 Hotel Srinivas C3
- 9 Nalapad Residency C3

Eating

- 10 Cochin Bakery B4
- Janatha Deluxe (see 7)

Kadal (see 9)

- 11 Lalith Bar & Restaurant C3
- 12 Pallkhi D3

Drinking

- 13 Café Coffee Day D3
- 14 Liquid Lounge C3

Transport

- 15 City Bus Stand B4
- 16 Indian Airlines B1
- 17 Jet Airways C2
- 18 KSRTC Bus Stand C1
- 19 Private Bus Company Offices C3
- 20 Private Bus Stand B4

Sleeping

Nalapad Residency

HOTEL \$\$

(☎2424757; www.nalapad.com; Lighthouse Hill Rd; s/d incl breakfast from ₹900/1000; ☹) The best midrange option in Mangalore comes with spruce rooms featuring floor-to-ceiling windows and heavy red curtains. The rooftop restaurant, Kadal, spices up your stay. Ask for a fifth- or sixth-floor room with brilliant sea views.

Hotel Ocean Pearl

HOTEL \$\$

(☎2413800; www.theoceanpearl.in; Navabharath Circle; s/d from ₹3000/3600; ☹☹) This brand-new designer hotel is clearly the talk of the town, with mint-fresh rooms featuring all the usual creature comforts paraded by business hotels. It's quite a steal for the price, but tariffs may go up once the inaugural offers draw to a close.

Summer Sands Beach Resort

HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎2467690; www.summersands.in; d from ₹5000; ☹☹) Set amid palm groves on a remote patch along Ullal Beach, Summer Sands offers a series of ethno-chic bungalows done up in earth and floral shades, and is the ideal place for a quiet retreat. Memories of Joanna, its restaurant, has pastoral decor and an excellent menu. The resort can arrange sightseeing tours on request.

Hotel Poonja International

HOTEL \$

(☎2440171; www.hotelpoonjainternational.com; KS Rao Rd; s/d incl breakfast from ₹900/1000; ☹) This well-managed place has faux creepers and

sunflowers lining its lobby, and the rooms (a whopping 154 of them) are well-appointed though low on frills. There's a multi-cuisine restaurant with a decent selection of Continental dishes.

Hotel Srinivas

HOTEL \$

(☎2440061; www.srinivashotel.com; GHS Rd; s/d from ₹550/700; ☹) It's centrally located and reasonably clean. There's an expo hall downstairs, which often organises sales (shoes, shirts and everything in between) at bumper discounts.

Hotel Shaan Plaza

HOTEL \$

(☎2440313; KS Rao Rd; s/d from ₹500/600; ☹) Piped music and TVs are standard features in the well-maintained rooms at this budget address.

Hotel Manorama

HOTEL \$

(☎2440306; KS Rao Rd; s/d from ₹400/600; ☹) A decent, centrally-located budget option, with clean and good-value rooms.

Eating & Drinking

While in town, sample some Mangalorean delights such as *kane* (ladyfish) served in a spicy coconut curry, or the scrumptious deep-fried prawn *rava* fry.

Kadal

SOUTH INDIAN \$\$

(Nalapad Residency, Lighthouse Hill Rd; mains ₹150-220) This high-rise restaurant has elegant and warmly lit interiors, with sweeping views all around. Try the spicy chicken *varval* (a coastal curry) or the yummy prawn ghee roast. Also enquire about the day's seafood specials.

Lalith Bar & Restaurant

SEAFOOD \$\$

(Balmatta Rd; mains ₹80-150) Unwind in the Lalith's cool, subterranean interior and pair a chilled beer with prawns, crab or kingfish from its extensive menu. The day's special seafood is usually the best bet.

Liquid Lounge

PUB \$\$

(☎24255175; Balmatta Rd; ☎7-11.30pm) A stiff Jack and Coke or the good old bottle of Corona, this trendy (and loud) pub has it all. With funky posters and neon-lit interiors upping its cool quotient, it's a great place to get happily drunk.

Janatha Deluxe

SOUTH INDIAN \$

(Hotel Shaan Plaza, mains ₹50-70; ☎7am-11pm) This local favourite serves a great veg thali (₹50) and a range of North and South Indian veg dishes.

Pallkhi

SEAFOOD \$\$

(3rd fl, Tej Towers, Balmatta Rd; mains ₹140-170) A relatively smart and easygoing place, with stylish interiors and a formidable reputation for its coastal dishes.

Cochin Bakery

BAKERY \$

(AB Shetty Circle; cakes ₹20-30; ☎9.30am-9pm Mon-Sat) An old-time place that works up delicious puffs and cakes.

Café Coffee Day

CAFE \$

(Balmatta Rd; ☎9.30am-11pm) A range of good coffees and teas on offer, along with some tasty quick bites.

i Information

State Bank of Mysore, Royal Bank of Scotland and ICICI Bank have ATMs on Balmatta Rd, Lighthouse Hill Rd and GHS Rd respectively.

Cyber Soft (Lighthouse Hill Rd; per hr ₹20; ☎10am-8pm) Fast internet access.

KSTDC tourist office (☎2453926; Lalbagh Circle; ☎10am-5pm Mon-Sat) Pretty useless.

Trade Wings (☎2427225; Lighthouse Hill Rd; ☎9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat) Travel agency. Changes travellers cheques.

i Getting There & Away**Air**

The **airport** is precariously perched atop a plateau in Bajpe, about 20km northeast of town. **Indian Airlines** (☎2496809; Hathill Rd) and **Jet Airways** (☎2441181; Ram Bhavan Complex, KS Rao Rd) both operate daily flights to Mumbai (1½ hours). Jet Airways also flies daily to Bengaluru (one hour).

Bus

The **KSRTC bus stand** is on Bejai Main Rd, 3km from the city centre; an autorickshaw there costs about ₹40. Several deluxe buses depart daily to Bengaluru (₹495, nine hours), via Madikeri (₹190, five hours) and Mysore (₹350, seven hours). Semideluxe buses go to Hassan (₹175, five hours). A 10.30pm deluxe bus heads to Panaji (₹399, seven hours). From opposite the City bus stand, private buses connect Udupi, Dharmasthala and Jog Falls. Tickets can be purchased at offices near Falnir Rd.

Roads around Mangalore are pothole hells, and journeys can be rough on the bum. Private bus drivers have a morbid fascination with speeding.

Train

The main **train station** is south of the city centre. The 12.20am *Netravati Express* stops at Margao in Goa (sleeper/2AC ₹194/702, 5½ hours), and continues to Mumbai (sleeper/2AC ₹361/1348, 15 hours). The 6.15pm *Malabar Express* heads to Thiruvananthapuram (Trivandrum; sleeper/2AC ₹257/941, 15 hours). The 9.30pm *West Coast Express* heads to Chennai (sleeper/2AC ₹317/1184, 18 hours).

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

i Getting Around

To get to the airport, take buses 47B or 47C from the City bus stand, or catch a taxi (₹400).

The City bus stand is opposite the State Bank of India. Flag fall for autorickshaws is ₹15, and ₹11 per kilometre thereafter. For late-night travel, add 50%. An autorickshaw to Kankanadi station costs around ₹60, or take bus 9 or 11B.

Dharmasthala

Inland from Mangalore are a string of Jain temple towns, such as Venur, Mudabidri and Karkal. The most interesting among them is Dharmasthala, 75km east of Mangalore by the Netravathi River. Some 10,000 pilgrims pass through this town every day. During holidays and major festivals such as **Lakshadeepotsava**, the footfall can go up tenfold.

The **Manjunatha Temple** (☎6.30am-2pm & 5-9pm) is Dharmasthala's main shrine, devoted to the Hindu lord Shiva. Men have to enter bare-chested, with legs covered. Simple free meals are available in the temple's **kitchen** (☎11.30am-2.15pm & 7.30-10pm), attached to a hall that can seat up to 3000.

Associated sights in town include the 12m-high **statue of Bahubali** at Ratnagiri Hill, and the **Manjusha Museum** (admission

₹2; ☉10am-1pm & 4.30-7pm Mon-Sat), which houses a collection of sculptures, jewellery and local crafts. Don't forget to visit the fantastic **Car Museum** (admission ₹3; ☉8.30am-1pm & 2-7pm), home to 48 vintage autos, including a 1903 Renault, a 1920s Studebaker President used by Mahatma Gandhi and a monster 1954 Cadillac.

Should you wish to stay, contact the helpful **temple office** (☎08256-277121; www.shridharmasthala.org) for accommodation (per person ₹50) in pilgrim lodges.

There are frequent buses to Dharmasthala from Mangalore (₹40, two hours).

Udupi (Udupi)

☎0820

Udupi is home to the atmospheric, 13th century **Krishna Temple** (Car St; ☉3.30am-10pm), which draws thousands of Hindu pilgrims through the year. Surrounded by eight *maths* (monasteries), it's a hive of ritual activity, with musicians playing at the entrance, elephants on hand for *puja*, and pilgrims constantly passing through. Non-Hindus are welcome inside the temple; men must enter bare-chested. Elaborate rituals are also performed in the temple during the **Udupi Paryaya festival**.

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

Udupi is famed for its vegetarian food, and recognised across India for its sumptuous thali. A good place to sample the local fare is the subterranean **Woodlands** (Dr UR Rao Complex; mains ₹60-90; ☉8am-9.30pm), a short walk south of the temple.

Udupi is 58km north of Mangalore along the coast; regular buses ply the route (₹36, 1½ hours).

Malpe

☎0820

A laid-back fishing harbour on the west coast 4km from Udupi, Malpe has fabulous beaches ideal for flopping about in the surf. A good place to stay is the **Paradise Isle Beach Resort** (☎2538777; www.theparadiseisle.com; s/d from ₹3000/3500; ☎@☎), right on the sands, which has comfortable rooms and offers **water sports** such as bumpy rides, jet skiing, river rafting and kayaking (₹500 to ₹1500).

From Malpe pier, you can take a boat (₹70 per person) at 10.30am and 3.30pm out to tiny **St Mary's Island**, where Vasco da Gama supposedly landed in 1498. Over weekends the island is busy with locals inspecting the curious hexagonal basalt formations that jut out of the sand; during the week you might have it to yourself. An autorickshaw from Udupi to Malpe is around ₹70.

Devbagh

About 50km north of Gokarna, on one of the many islands that dot the Arabian Sea off the port town of Karwar, is the unspoilt and heavenly **Devbagh Beach Resort** (☎08382-221603; per person incl full board Indian/foreigner from ₹2500/₹70; ☎). It's the perfect place to play out your Robinson Crusoe fantasies, or stroll aimlessly along the sands. Accommodation comes in cute and comfy fishermen's huts, cottages, log huts and houseboats. **Water sports** such as kayaking (₹300), snorkelling (₹700) and parasailing (₹900) are extra.

FORMULA BUFFALO

Call it an indigenous take on the grand prix. Kambla, or traditional buffalo racing, is a hugely popular pastime among villagers along the southern Karnataka coast. Popularised in the early 20th century and born out of local farmers habitually racing their buffaloes home after a day in the fields, the races have now hit the big time. Thousands of spectators attend each edition, and racing buffaloes are pampered and prepared like thoroughbreds – a good animal can cost ₹300,000.

Kambla events are held between November and March, usually on weekends. Parallel tracks are laid out in a paddy field, along which buffaloes hurtle towards the finish line. In most cases, the man rides on a board fixed to a ploughshare, literally surfing his way down the track behind the beasts.

Keep your cameras ready, but don't even think of getting in the buffaloes' way to take that prize-winning photo. The faster creatures can cover the 120m-odd distance through water and mud in around 14 seconds!

You can reach Karwar by taking a slow bus from Gokarna (₹36, 1½ hours) or Panaji (₹50, three hours). Call the resort in advance to arrange a ferry from their satellite office in Karwar. Make bookings through **Jungle Lodges & Resorts Ltd** (Map p844; ☎080-25597944; www.junglelodges.com; Shrungar Shopping Complex, MG Rd, Bengaluru; ☀10am-5.30pm Mon-Sat).

Jog Falls

☎08186

Nominally the highest waterfalls in India, the Jog Falls only come to life during the monsoon. At other times, the Linganamakki Dam further up the Sharavati River limits the water flow and spoils the show. The tallest of the four falls is the Raja, which drops 293m.

To get a good view of the falls, bypass the scrappy area close to the bus stand and hike to the foot of the falls down a 1200-plus step path. Watch out for leeches during the wet season.

Hotel Mayura Gerusoppa (☎244732; d ₹650), near the car park, has a few enormous and musty doubles. Stalls near the bus stand serve omelettes, thalis, noodles and rice dishes, plus hot and cold drinks.

Jog Falls has buses roughly every hour to Shimoga (₹53, three hours), and three daily to Karwar via Kumta (₹51, three hours), where you can change for Gokarna (₹16, one hour). For Mangalore, change at Shimoga. A return taxi from Gokarna will cost around ₹1500.

Gokarna

☎08386

Quaint but vibrant Gokarna sits on a secluded seaside spot about 60km south of Karwar. A dazzling mix of Hindu rituals and a medieval way of life is on show at this village, whose dramatic ambience is heightened during **festivals** such as Shivaratri and Ganesh Chaturthi, when thousands of pilgrims throng its ancient temples. While the main village is rather conservative in its outlook, a few out-of-town beaches are custom-made for carefree sunbaking.

👁 Sights & Activities

Temples

HINDU TEMPLES

Foreigners and non-Hindus are not allowed inside Gokarna's temples. However, there are plenty of colourful rituals to be witnessed around town. At the western end

of Car St is the **Mahabaleshwara Temple**, home to a revered lingam (phallic representation of Shiva). Nearby is the **Ganapati Temple**, while at the other end of the street is the **Venkataraman Temple**. About 100m further south is **Koorti Teertha**, the large temple tank (reservoir) where locals, pilgrims and immaculately dressed Brahmins perform their ablutions next to washermen on the ghats (steps or landings).

Beaches

BEACHES

Gokarna's 'town beach' is dirty, and not meant for casual bathing. The best sands are due south, and can be reached via a footpath that begins south of the Ganapati Temple and heads down the coast (if you reach the bathing tank, or find yourself clawing up rocks, you're on the wrong path).

A 20-minute hike on the path brings you to the top of a barren headland with expansive sea views. On the southern side is **Kudle** (pronounced kood-lay), the first of Gokarna's pristine beaches. Basic snacks, drinks and accommodation are available here, and it's a nice place to chill. South 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 shops, shacks and marauding groups of local tourists on weekends.

South of Om Beach lie the more isolated **Half-Moon Beach** and **Paradise Beach**, which come to life only between November and March. They are a 30-minute and one-hour walk, respectively.

Depending on demand, fishing boats can ferry you from Gokarna Beach to Kudle (₹100) and Om (₹200). An autorickshaw from town to Om costs around ₹200.

Don't walk around after dark, and not 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 store valuables and baggage while you chill out on the beach.

Ayurveda

AYURVEDA

Well-trained masseurs at **Ayur Kuteeram** (☎9480575351; Gokarna Beach; ☀9am-8pm) can work magic on those knotty muscles. An *Abhayanga* treatment costs a mere ₹700.

Quality ayurvedic therapies and packages are also available at specialist ayurvedic centres at the SwaSwara resort and Om Beach Resort.

🛏 Sleeping

With a few exceptions, the choice here is between a rudimentary beach shack or a

WALK ON THE WILD SIDE

Located in the jungles of the Western Ghats about 100km from Goa, emerging **Dandeli** is a fantabulous wildlife getaway that promises close encounters with diverse exotic wildlife such as elephants, panthers, sloth bears, Indian bisons, wild dogs and flying squirrels. It's a chosen birding destination too, with resident hornbills, golden-backed woodpeckers, serpent eagles and white-breasted kingfishers. Also on offer are a slew of adventure activities ranging from kayaking to bowel-churning white-water rafting on the swirling waters of the Kali River.

Kali Adventure Camp (per person incl full board Indian/foreigner from ₹2300/€70; ☼) offers accommodation in tented cottages and rooms, done up lavishly while adhering to ecofriendly principles. Book through **Jungle Lodges & Resorts Ltd** (Map p844; ☎080-25597944; www.junglelodges.com; Shrungar Shopping Complex, MG Rd, Bengaluru; ☀10am-5.30pm Mon-Sat).

Frequent buses connect Dandeli to both Hubli (₹45, two hours) and Dharwad (₹35, 1½ hours), with onward connections to Goa, Gokarna, Hospet and Bengaluru.

basic but more comfortable room in town. Some guesthouses in town cater to pilgrims, and may come with certain rules and regulations. Prices can increase during festivals or the high season.

BEACHES

Both Kudle and Om beaches have shacks offering budget huts and rooms. Places open up on Half-Moon and Paradise beaches from November to March. Most places provide at least a bedroll; bring your own sheets or sleeping bag. Padlocks are provided and huts are secure. Communal washing and toilet facilities are simple.



SwaSwara

HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎257132, 0484-3011711; www.swaswara.com; Om Beach; d 7 nights Indian/foreigner ₹115,000/€2015; ☼@☼) Clearly in a league of its own, this amazing health resort sits on the hill overlooking Om Beach. No short stays on offer here, but you can chill out at this elegant and superbly designed red-laterite-brick resort for a full week, and enjoy a holiday based around yoga and ayurvedic treatments. There's an interactive kitchen here, and the artists in residence can help you hone your creative skills. Rates include full board, transport, leisure activities and daily yoga sessions. Weeklong ayurvedic treatment packages kick off at around US\$600.

Namaste Café

GUESTHOUSE \$

(☎257141; Om Beach; huts from ₹700; ☼@) In and out of season, Namaste is the place to hang. What's better, the place has upped its

luxuries since the last time we were here, and now offers AC and internet on its serene Om Beach premises. The restaurant-bar cooks up great bites and is the premier Om chill-out spot. In season, it also offers basic huts (₹150) at Paradise Beach and cottages at Namaste Farm (from ₹500) on the headland.

Hotel Gokarna International Kudle Resort

HOTEL \$\$

(☎257843; Kudle Beach; d ₹1500; ☼) Run by the same management that owns Hotel Gokarna International in town, this midrange option has smart rooms and a lovely garden up front. The waves wash up to its gates during high tide, and seal the deal in its favour.

Nirvana Café

GUESTHOUSE \$

(☎329851; Om Beach; d ₹300; cottage ₹400) Located on the southern end of Om, this extremely pleasant guesthouse featuring huts within a shady garden should be done renovating by now.

GOKARNA

Om Beach Resort

HOTEL \$\$

(☎257052; www.ombeachresort.com; Bangle Gудde; d incl breakfast Indian/foreigner ₹2800/US\$105; ☼@) This little jewel sits on a headland 2km out of Gokarna, off the Om Beach road. Set amid lawns and shady trees, its red-brick cottages are excellently designed, and its restaurant serves good seafood to go with the booze. There's a professional ayurvedic centre on site, with seven-night treatment packages starting from US\$490 per person.

Kamat Lodge

GUESTHOUSE \$
(☎256035; Kamat Complex, Main St; s/d ₹200/300, d with AC ₹1200; ☎) A value-for-money place on Gokarna's main drag, this hotel offers clean rooms with fresh sheets and large windows. But don't expect room service and other such fluffs.

Nimmu House

GUESTHOUSE \$
(☎256730; nimmuhouse@yahoo.com; s/d from ₹250/500; @) A pleasant option off Gokarna's main beach, run by a friendly family.

Vaibhav Lodge

GUESTHOUSE \$
(☎256714; off Main St; d ₹250, s/d ₹150/200; @) A backpackers' dig, with mosquito nets, hot water in the morning and a rooftop restaurant.

Shastri Guest House

GUESTHOUSE \$
(☎256220; Main St; s/d/tr ₹160/280/400) A hostel-like place with good, airy doubles in the new block out back. The singles are cramped, though.

**Eating**

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

**Namaste Café**

CAFE \$
(Om Beach, mains ₹80-100; ☎7am-11pm) Om Beach's social centre serves some excellent Western staples such as pizzas, burgers and shakes. But the real draws are its tasty seafood dishes, especially the grilled calamari and the pomfret preparations. And remember, you're hogging it all up while sitting on a most beautiful seaside venue. Dinners are particularly enjoyable, after noisy local tourists have called it a day.

Prema Restaurant

MULTICUISINE \$
(Gokarna Beach; mains ₹80-110; ☎10am-8.30pm) A decent menu comprising Continental extempores and colourful ice-creams. Spice packs and herbal oils for sale at the counter.

Pai Restaurant

SOUTH INDIAN \$
(Main St; mains ₹50-80; ☎6.30am-9.30pm) Serves an awesome veg thali for ₹55.

Pai Hotel

INDIAN \$
(Car St) A popular and freshly renovated eatery with an excellent vegetarian menu.

**Information**

SBI (Main St) Has an ATM.

Shama Internet Centre (Car St; per hr ₹40; ☎10am-11pm) Fast internet connections.

Sub post office (1st fl, cnr Car & Main Sts; 10am-4pm Mon-Sat)

Getting There & Away**Bus**

From the rudimentary **bus stand**, rickety buses roll to Karwar (₹33, 1½ hours), which has connections to Goa. Frequent direct buses run to Hubli (₹107, four hours), where you can change for Hospet and Hampi, while an evening bus goes to Bengaluru (₹402, 12 hours).

Train

Express trains stop at **Kumta station**, 25km away. The 3.30am *Matsyagandha Express* goes to Mangalore (sleeper ₹166, 3½ hours); the return train leaves Kumta at 6.20pm for Margao (sleeper ₹140, 2½ hours). Many of the hotels and small travel agencies in Gokarna can book tickets.

Autorickshaws charge ₹250 to go to Kumta station; a bus charges ₹15.

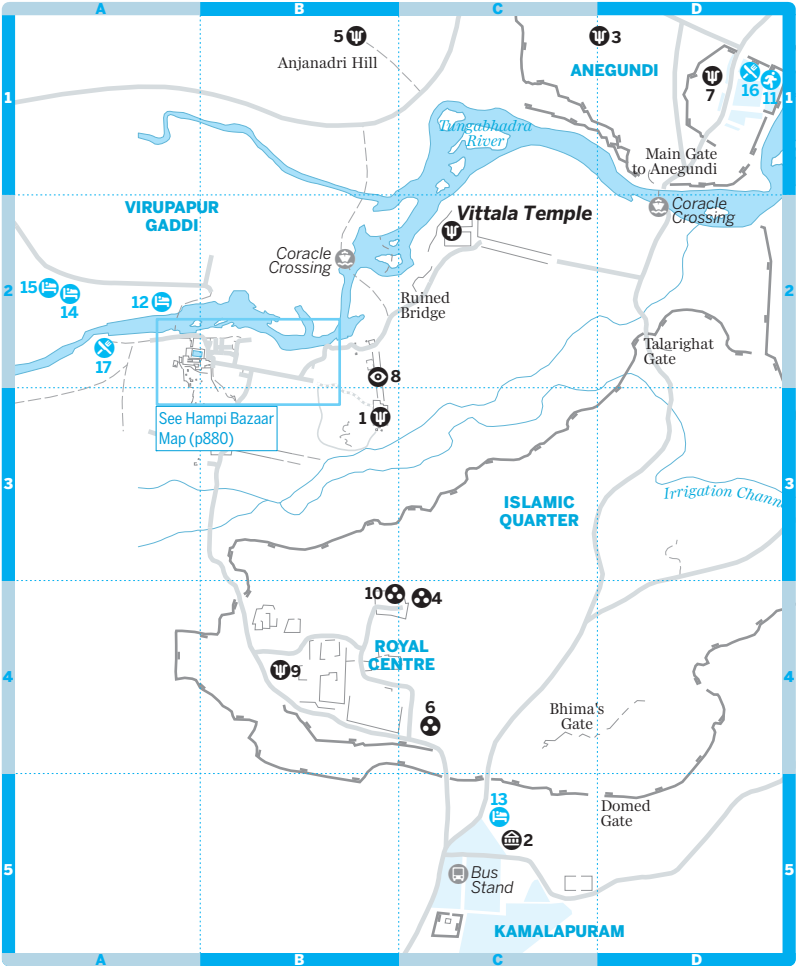
CENTRAL KARNATAKA**Hampi**

☎08394

Unreal and bewitching, the forlorn ruins of Hampi dot an unearthly landscape that will leave you spellbound the moment you cast your eyes on it. Heaps of giant boulders perch precariously over miles of undulated terrain, their rusty hues offset by jade-green palm groves, banana plantations and paddy fields. The azure sky painted with fluffy white cirrus only adds to the magical atmosphere. A World Heritage Site, Hampi is a place where you can lose yourself among wistful ruins, or simply be mesmerised by the vagaries of nature, wondering how millions of years of volcanic activity and erosion could have resulted in a landscape so captivating.

Hampi is a major pit stop on the traveller circuit; November to March is the high season. While it's possible to see the main sites in a day or two, this goes against Hampi's relaxed grain. Plan on lingering for a while.

Hampi Bazaar and the southern village of Kamalapuram are the two main points of entry to the ruins. Kamalapuram has a government-run hotel and the archaeological museum. But the main travellers' ghetto is Hampi Bazaar, a village crammed with budget lodges, shops and restaurants, all



towered over by the majestic Virupaksha Temple. The ruins are divided into two main areas: the Sacred Centre, around Hampi Bazaar; and the Royal Centre, towards Kamalapuram. To the northeast across the Tungabhadra River is the historic village of Anegundi.

History

Hampi and its neighbouring areas find mention in the Hindu epic Ramayana as Kishkinda, the realm of the monkey gods. In 1336, Telugu prince Harihararaya chose Hampi as the site for his new capital

Vijayanagar, which – over the next couple of centuries – grew into one of the largest Hindu empires in Indian history. By the 16th century, it was a thriving metropolis of about 500,000 people, its busy bazaars dabbling in international commerce, brimming with precious stones and merchants from faraway lands. All this, however, ended in a stroke in 1565, when a confederacy of Deccan sultanates razed Vijayanagar to the ground, striking it a death blow from which it never recovered.

A different battle rages in Hampi today, between conservationists bent on protecting

Hampi & Anegundi

📍 Top Sights

Vittala Temple.....C2

📍 Sights

- 1 Achyutaraya Temple.....B3
- 2 Archaeological Museum.....C5
- 3 Durga Temple.....D1
- 4 Elephant Stables.....C4
- 5 Hanuman Temple.....B1
- Lotus Mahal.....(see 10)
- 6 Queen's Bath.....C4
- 7 Ranganatha Temple.....D1
- 8 Sule Bazaar.....B2
- 9 Underground Shiva Temple.....B4
- 10 Zenana Enclosure.....B4

📍 Activities, Courses & Tours

- 11 Kishkinda Trust.....D1

🛏 Sleeping

- 12 Hema Guest House.....A2
- 13 Hotel Mayura Bhuvaneshwari.....C5
- 14 Mowgli.....A2
- 15 Shanthi.....A2

🍴 Eating

- 16 Hoova Craft Shop & Cafe.....D1
- 17 Mango Tree.....A2

Hampi's architectural heritage and the locals who have settled there. A master plan has been in the works since mid-2000s, which aims to classify all of Hampi's ruins as protected monuments, while resettling villagers at a new commercial and residential complex away from the architectural enclosures. However, implementation is bound to take time. **Global Heritage Fund** (www.globalheritagefund.org) has more details about Hampi's endangered heritage.

👁 Sights

Virupaksha Temple

HINDU TEMPLE

(Map p880; admission ₹2; ☀dawn-dusk) The focal point of Hampi Bazaar is the Virupaksha Temple, 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, an incarnation of Shiva.

If Lakshmi (the **temple elephant**) and her attendant are around, she'll smooch (bless) you for a coin. The adorable Lakshmi gets her morning bath at 8.30am, just down the way by the river ghats.

To the south, overlooking Virupaksha Temple, **Hemakuta Hill** (Map p880) has a few early ruins, including monolithic sculptures of Narasimha (Vishnu in his man-lion incarnation) and Ganesha. At the east end of Hampi Bazaar is a monolithic **Nandi statue** (Map p880), around which stand colonnaded blocks of the ancient marketplace. Overlooking the site is Matanga Hill, whose summit affords dramatic views of the terrain at sunrise. The **Vijaya Utsav festival** is held at the base of the hill in January.

Vittala Temple

HINDU TEMPLE

(Map p877; Indian/foreigner ₹10/250; ☀8.30am-5.30pm) The undisputed highlight of the Hampi ruins, the 16th-century Vittala Temple stands amid the boulders 2km from Hampi Bazaar. Though a few cement scaffolds have been erected to keep the main structure from collapsing, the site is in relatively good condition.

Work possibly started on the temple during the reign of Krishnadevaraya (r 1509–29). It was never finished or consecrated, yet the temple's incredible sculptural work remains the pinnacle of Vijayanagar art. The outer 'musical' pillars reverberate when tapped, but authorities have placed them out of tourists' bounds for fear of further damage, so no more do-re-mi. Don't miss the temple's showcase piece, the ornate **stone chariot** that stands in the temple courtyard, whose wheels were once capable of turning.

Retain your ticket for same-day admission into the Zenana Enclosure and



OUT OF HARM'S WAY

» Hampi Bazaar is an extremely safe area, but do not wander around the ruins after dark or alone. It's a dangerous terrain to get lost in; long-time guides have even sighted sloth bears prowling around Vittala Temple at night!

» Alcohol and narcotics are illegal in Hampi, and possession can get you in trouble. Cannabis peddlers lurk by the riverside after dark, but you'd do well to give them a wide berth.

» Local laws require all foreign travelers to report to the police station with their passports upon arrival, and notify the authorities about their proposed duration of stay.

Elephant Stables in the Royal Centre, and the archaeological museum in Kamalapuram.

Sule Bazaar & Achyutaraya Temple

HISTORIC SITE

Halfway along the path from Hampi Bazaar to the Vittala Temple, a track to the right leads over the rocks to deserted **Sule Bazaar** (Map p877), one of ancient Hampi's principal centres of commerce. At the southern end of this area is the deserted **Achyutaraya Temple** (Map p877).

Royal Centre

HISTORIC SITE

(Map p877) While it can be accessed by a 2km foot trail from the Achyutaraya Temple, the Royal Centre is best reached via the Hampi-Kamalapuram road. It's a flatter area compared to the rest of Hampi, where the boulders have been shaved off to create stone walls. A number of Hampi's major sites stand here, within the walled ladies' quarters called the **Zenana Enclosure** (Map p877; Indian/foreigner ₹10/250; ☉8.30am-5.30pm). There's the **Lotus Mahal** (Map p877), a delicately designed pavilion which was supposedly the queen's recreational mansion. The Lotus Mahal overlooks the **Elephant Stables** (Map p877), a grand building with domed chambers. Your ticket is valid for same-day admission to the Vittala Temple and the archaeological museum in Kamalapuram.

Further south, you'll find various temples and elaborate waterworks, including the **Underground Shiva Temple** (Map p877; ☉8.30am-5.30pm) and the **Queen's Bath** (Map p877; ☉8.30am-5.30pm), deceptively plain on the outside but amazing within.

Archaeological Museum

MUSEUM

(Map p877; Kamalapuram; admission ₹5; ☉10am-5pm Sat-Thu) The archaeological museum has collections of sculptures from local ruins, neolithic tools, 16th-century weaponry and a large floor model of the Vijayanagar ruins.

Sleeping

There's little to choose from between the many basic guesthouses in Hampi Bazaar and Virupapur Gaddi, some of which have lately undergone refitting to attract upmarket travellers. Between April and September you can shop around to get a good deal. The only government-run hotel (with a legal beer bar and a nonveg restaurant) is in Kamalapuram. Prices can shoot up depending on demand.

Also remember that most of the guesthouses in Hampi Bazaar are small operations, comprising only about half-a-dozen rooms of so. It might help to book early during high seasons.

HAMPI BAZAAR



Padma Guest House

GUESTHOUSE \$\$

(Map p880; ☎241331; padmaguesthouse@gmail.com; d from ₹600; ☹) In a quiet corner of Hampi Bazaar, the astute and amiable Padma has been quietly expanding her empire since we were last here. The basic but squeaky clean rooms are a pleasant deviation from Hampi's usual offerings, and those on the first floor have good views of the Virupaksha Temple. New rooms have been added to the west, with creature comforts (TV and AC) previously unheard of in Hampi. Well done, says 'Lovely Planet'.

Gopi Guest House

GUESTHOUSE \$

(Map p880; ☎241695; kirangopi2002@yahoo.com; d ₹350-1000; ☹☹) Centrally located amid the bustle of Hampi Bazaar, this pleasant dive continues to provide commendable service to travellers. The new block is quite upscale for Hampi's standards, with en suite rooms fronted by a sun-kissed terrace. The rooftop cafe - with a lovely view of the Virupaksha Temple - is a nice place to hang out.

Pushpa Guest House

GUESTHOUSE \$

(Map p880; ☎241440; d from ₹500) This place was putting finishing touches to its terrace rooms during research, many of which already sported flowery pink walls and tiled floors. There is an extremely cordial family playing host, and a lovely sit-out on the first floor.

Shanthi Guest House

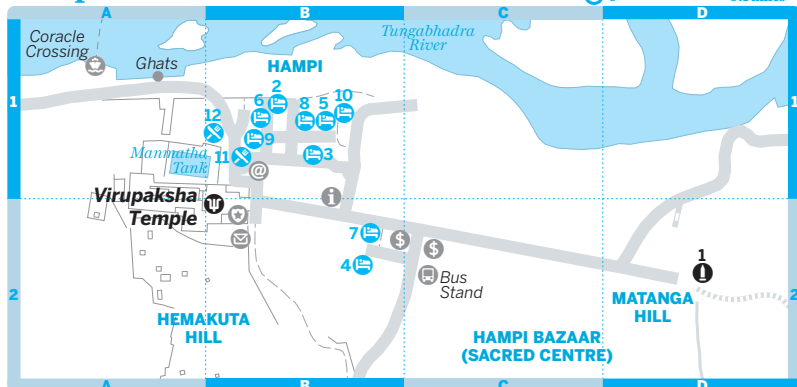
GUESTHOUSE \$

(Map p880; ☎241568; s/d ₹300/350, without bathroom ₹150/250) An oldie but a goodie, Shanthi offers a peaceful courtyard with a swing chair, and has plastic creepers and colourful posters of a hundred gods decorating its basic rooms. There's a small souvenir shop at the entrance that operates on an honour system.

Ranjana Guest House

GUESTHOUSE \$

(Map p880; ☎241696; d with/without AC ₹800/600; ☹) Almost on a par with Padma next door, this place also prides itself on well-appointed rooms; those on the terrace have killer views. There are a few cheapies adjoining the family quarters downstairs.

**Rama Guest House**

GUESTHOUSE \$

(Map p880; d ₹400-600) Sitting close to the river, this place seems a popular option with Bengaluru's young weekenders. Some rooms are a little low on light, though adequately appointed for a budget dig.

Vicky's

GUESTHOUSE \$

(Map p880; ☎241694; vikkyhampi@yahoo.co.in; d ₹350; @) A large operation done up in pop purple and green, with tiled floors, internet access and rooftop cafe. Fix the rate firmly while booking.

Rocky Guest House

GUESTHOUSE \$

(Map p880; ☎241951; rockyhampi@yahoo.co.in; d ₹400) A comfy option opposite Gopi, with clean rooms, friendly management and a travel desk.

Archana Guest House

GUESTHOUSE \$

(Map p880; ☎241547; addihampi@yahoo.com; d from ₹500) A quiet and cheerful establishment at the end of a lane, with decent rooms.

VIRUPAPUR GADDI

Many travellers prefer the tranquil atmosphere of Virupapur Gaddi, across the river from Hampi Bazaar. A small boat (₹10) shuttles frequently across the river from 7am to 6pm. During the monsoon, the river runs high and ferry services may be suspended.

Hema Guest House

GUESTHOUSE \$

(Map p877; ☎9449103008; d ₹250) Laid-back and happening, this is one of Virupapur Gaddi's most popular spots, with rows of cute and comfy cottages in a shady grove. The informal river-view cafe is perpetually full with lazing tourists.

Shanthi

GUESTHOUSE \$

(Map p877; ☎9449260162; shanthi.hampi@gmail.com; cottage ₹500-800; @) Shanthi's earth-themed, thatched cottages have rice-field, river and sunset views, with couch swings dangling in their front porches. The restaurant does good thalis and pizzas.

Mowgli

GUESTHOUSE \$\$

(Map p877; ☎9448217588; hampimowgli@hotmail.com; d ₹500-1200; ☎@) A cluster of lilac cottages thrown around a sprawling garden complex with soothing views across the rice fields, Mowgli is a top-class chill-out spot this side of the river. It can fill up quickly over weekends, so book early.

KAMALAPURAM**Hotel Mayura Bhuvaneshwari**

HOTEL \$\$

(Map p877; ☎08394-241474; d from ₹1200; ☎) This tidy government operation, about 3km south of the Royal Centre, has well-appointed rooms (adorned with corny murals), a much-appreciated beer bar, a good multi-cuisine restaurant and ayurvedic sessions (from ₹1500) on request.

**Eating**

Due to Hampi's religious significance, meat is strictly off the menu in all restaurants, and alcohol is banned. Places are open from 7am to 10pm.

**Mango Tree**

MULTICUISINE \$\$

(Map p877; mains ₹70-100) Creativity blends with culinary excellence at this rural-themed chill-out joint, spread out under the eponymous mango tree by the river. Walk through

Hampi Bazaar

📍 Top Sights

Virupaksha Temple B2

📍 Sights

1 Nandi Statue D2

🛏 Sleeping

2 Archana Guest House B1

3 Gopi Guest House B1

4 Padma Guest House B2

5 Pushpa Guest House B1

6 Rama Guest House B1

7 Ranjana Guest House B2

8 Rocky Guest House B1

9 Shanthi Guest House B1

10 Vicky's B1

🍴 Eating

11 Durga Huts B1

12 New Shanthi B1

a banana plantation to get here, and try the special vegetable curry (₹100), the banana fritters (₹60) or the spaghetti with cashew nuts and cheese (₹100). The terraced seating is perfect for whiling away a lazy afternoon, book in hand.

New Shanthi

MULTICUISINE \$\$

(Map p880; mains ₹80-120) A hippie vibe, complete with trance music and acid-blue lights, hangs over this popular option serving Mexican, Italian and Indian regulars, with cookies and crumbles on the side. A good range of teas (jasmine, lemongrass and herbal) are on offer.

Durga Huts

CAFE \$

(Map p880; mains ₹60-80) Clearly a hit with music lovers. Prem Joshua's fusion tracks get heavy airplay here, and there are a few guitars and drums on standby for an impromptu jam session. The food is of passable quality.

📍 Information

Aspiration Stores (🕒10am-1pm & 4-8pm) Good for book guides. Try *Hampi* by John M Fritz and George Michell, a good architectural study.

Canara Bank (Map p880; 🕒11am-2pm Mon-Tue & Thu-Fri, 11am-12.30pm Sat) Changes currency and has an ATM.

Hampi Heritage Gallery (🕒10am-1pm & 3-6pm) Books and photo albums on Hampi's history and architecture, plus walking tours for ₹250.

Sree Rama Cyber Café (Map p880; per hr ₹40; 🕒7am-11pm) Has printing and data burning facilities.

Tourist office (Map p880; ☎241339; 🕒10am-5.30pm Sat-Thu) Arranges guides for ₹300/600 for a half/full day.

📍 Getting There & Away

A semideluxe bus connects Hampi Bazaar to Bengaluru (₹372, eight hours) leaving at 8.30pm. Overnight private sleeper buses ply to/from Goa (₹600) and Gokarna (₹500) from November through March. Numerous travel agents in Hampi Bazaar book onward tickets or arrange taxis.

Hospet is Hampi's nearest train station. The first bus from Hospet (₹12, 30 minutes, half-hourly) is at 6.30am; the last one back leaves Hampi Bazaar at 8.30pm. An autorickshaw costs around ₹150. See p883 for onward transport information.

📍 Getting Around

Once you've seen the main sights in Hampi, exploring the rest of the ruins by bicycle is the thing to do. The key monuments are haphazardly signposted all over the site. While they're not adequate, you shouldn't get lost. Bicycles cost about ₹30 per day in Hampi Bazaar. Mopeds can be hired for around ₹250, and petrol is ₹70 a litre. To cross the river, pile your vehicle onto a coracle for ₹10.

Walking the ruins is recommended too, but expect to cover at least 7km just to see the major sites. 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 ₹500.

Organised tours depart from Hospet; see p883 for details.

Around Hampi

ANEGUNDI

Across the Tungabhadra, about 5km north-east of Hampi Bazaar, sits Anegundi, an ancient fortified village that's part of the Hampi World Heritage Site but predates Hampi by way of human habitation. Gifted with a landscape similar to Hampi, quainter Anegundi has been spared the blight of

DANCES WITH BEARS

About 15km south of Hampi, amid a scrubby undulated terrain, lies the **Daroji Sloth Bear Sanctuary** (admission ₹25; ☀9.30am-6pm), which nurses a population of around 40 free-ranging sloth bears. It's possible to drive through the sanctuary and sight these furry creatures, along with leopards, wild boars, hyenas, jackals and others animals, as well as some exotic birds. Accommodation is in luxury cottages at the **Daroji Sloth Bear Resort** (per person incl full board Indian/foreigner from ₹3000/€70; 🍷), located on the sanctuary's periphery. Book through **Jungle Lodges & Resorts Ltd** (Map p844; ☎080-25597944; www.junglelodges.com; Shrunagar Shopping Complex, MG Rd, Bengaluru; ☀10am-5.30pm Mon-Sat). The resort can arrange pick-up and drop off from Hampi.

commercialisation, and thus continues to preserve the local atmosphere minus the touristy vibe.

👁 Sights & Activities

Temples

HINDU TEMPLES

Mythically referred to as Kishkinda, the kingdom of the monkey gods, Anegundi retains many of its historic monuments, such as sections of its defensive wall and gates, and the **Ranganatha Temple** (Map p877; ☀dawn-dusk) devoted to Rama. The whitewashed **Hanuman Temple** (Map p877; ☀dawn-dusk), accessible by a 570-step climb up the Anjanadri Hill, has fine views of the rugged terrain around. Many believe this is the birthplace of the Hindu monkey god Hanuman. On the pleasant hike up, you'll be courted by impish monkeys, and within the temple you'll find a horde of chillum-puffing resident sadhus. Also worth visiting is the **Durga Temple** (Map p877; ☀dawn-dusk), an ancient shrine closer to the village.

Kishkinda

Trust

CULTURAL PROGRAMS, OUTDOOR ADVENTURE

(TKT; Map p877; ☎08533-267777; www.thekishkindatrust.org) The Kishkinda Trust, an NGO that promotes sustainable tourism in Anegundi, organises soft adventure activities such as rock-climbing, camping, trekking and boating around the village. Equipment and trained instructors are provided. A slew of cultural programs, including performing arts sessions and classical and folk music concerts are also conducted from time to time. For more information on TKT, see the boxed text, p882.

Sleeping & Eating

Anegundi has several homestays managed by TKT. Contact the trust for bookings. Guesthouses listed can provide meals upon prior notice.

Naidile Guest House

GUESTHOUSE \$\$

(d ₹1500) A charmingly rustic air hangs over this renovated village home in the heart of Anegundi where you can savour all the sights and sounds of the ancient village. It can sleep up to five people.

Peshagar Guest House

GUESTHOUSE \$

(d incl breakfast ₹600) Six simple rooms done up in rural motifs open around a pleasant common area in this new guesthouse. There's also a sumptuous breakfast platter available.

TEMA Guest House

GUESTHOUSE \$

(d incl breakfast ₹700) The two rooms in this village quarters were undergoing renovation during research, and should be back in commission by now.

Champa Guest House

GUESTHOUSE \$

(d incl breakfast ₹700) Champa offers basic but pleasant accommodation in two rooms, and is looked after by an affable village family.

Hoova Craft Shop & Café

CAFE \$

(mains ₹40-60; ☀9.30am-5pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-2pm Sun) A lovely place for an unhurried meal. You can also shop for sundry souvenirs made by the village's women's self-help groups.

i Getting There & Away

Anegundi can be reached by crossing the river on a coracle (₹10) from the pier east of the Vittala Temple. The concrete bridge that was being erected across the river has mysteriously collapsed, taking away with it all hopes of cycling across.

You can also get to Anegundi by taking a bus (₹25, one hour) from Hospet.

Hospet

☎08394 / POP 164,200

This busy regional centre is the main transport hub for Hampi. The Muslim festival of **Muharram** brings things to life in this other-

wise dull transit town. With Hampi barely 30 minutes away, few choose to linger here.

Sleeping & Eating

Hotel Priyadarshini

HOTEL \$

(☎227313; www.priyainhampi.com; Station Rd; d ₹800-950; 🍷) This old-timer has a convenient location between the bus and train stations. The fresh rooms have balconies and TV, and its quality outdoor nonveg restaurant-bar **Manasa** (mains ₹60 to ₹120) stirs to life in the evenings.

Hotel Malligi

HOTEL \$\$

(☎228101; www.malligihotels.com; Jabunatha Rd; d Indian/foreigner ₹2800/3500; 🍷@🍷) Hospet's premier luxury option builds its reputation around clean and well-serviced rooms, an aquamarine swimming pool, a spa and a good multicuisine restaurant.

Udupi Sri Krishna Bhavan

SOUTH INDIAN \$

(Bus stand; mains ₹30-50; 🕒6am-11pm) Opposite the bus stand, this clean spot dishes out Indian vegie fare, including thalis for ₹35.

Information

SBI, HDFC Bank and ICICI Bank have ATMs along the main drag and Shanbagh Circle. Internet joints are common, with connections costing ₹40 per hour.

KSTDC tourist office (☎221008; Shanbagh Circle; 🕒10am-5.30pm Mon-Sat) Offers an uninspiring Hampi tour (₹250) for groups of 10 or more.

Getting There & Away

Bus

The **bus stand** has services to Hampi from Bay 10 every half-hour (₹12, 30 minutes). Several express buses run to Bengaluru (ordinary/deluxe ₹212/306, nine hours). One bus goes to Badami (₹155, six hours) at 6.30am, or you can take a bus to Gadag (₹76, 2½ hours) and transfer. There are frequent buses to Bijapur (₹148, six hours) and overnight services to Hyderabad (₹335, 10 hours). For Gokarna, take a bus to Hubli (₹108, 4½ hours) and change. For Mangalore or Hassan, take a morning bus to Shimoga (₹203, five hours) and change there.

Train

Hospet's **train station** is a ₹20 autorickshaw journey from town. The 5.30am *Royalaseema Express* heads to Hubli (2nd class ₹120, 3½ hours). For Bengaluru, take the 8.30pm *Hampi Express* (sleeper/2AC ₹187/720, nine hours). Every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday, a 6.30am express train heads to Vasco da Gama (sleeper/2AC ₹176/630, 8½ hours).

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

Hubli

☎0836 / POP 786,100

Prosperous Hubli is a hub for rail routes for Mumbai, Bengaluru, Goa and northern Karnataka. The train station is a 15-minute walk from the old bus stand. Most hotels sit along this stretch.

Sleeping & Eating

Ananth Residency

HOTEL \$\$

(☎2262251; ananthresidencyhubli@yahoo.co.uk; Jayachamaraj Nagar; d from ₹1100; 🍷) A brand-new option that sports a sleek business-hotel look and feel. Has good-value rooms and efficient service.

Hotel Ajanta

HOTEL \$

(☎2362216; Jayachamaraj Nagar; s/d from ₹250/330) This well-run place near the train station has basic, functional rooms. Its popular ground-floor restaurant serves delicious regional-style thalis for ₹35.

Sudarshan

INDIAN \$\$

(Jayachamaraj Nagar; mains ₹90-100) The non-veg bar-restaurant at Ananth Residency is a cheerful eatery with good food and chilled beer.

Information

SBI has an ATM opposite the bus stand. On the same stretch are several internet cafes, charging around ₹30 per hour.

Getting There & Away

Bus

Buses stop briefly at the **old bus stand** before moving to the **new bus stand** 2km away. There are numerous semideluxe services to Bengaluru (₹304, 10 hours), Bijapur (₹156, six hours) and Hospet (₹108, 4½ hours). There are regular connections to Mangalore (₹255, 10 hours, several daily), Borivali in Mumbai (semideluxe/sleeper ₹482/762, 14 hours, four daily), Mysore (₹299, 10 hours, three daily), Gokarna (₹110, five hours, two daily) and Panaji (₹204, six hours, six daily).

Private deluxe buses to Bengaluru (₹370) run from opposite the old bus stand.

Train

From the **train station**, expresses head to Hospet (2nd class ₹120, 3½ hours, three daily), Bengaluru (sleeper/2AC ₹203/910, 11 hours, four daily) and Mumbai (sleeper/2AC ₹285/1057,

THE KISHKINDA TRUST

Since 1995, the **Kishkinda Trust** (TKT; ☎08533-267777; www.thekishkindatrust.org) has been actively involved in promoting rural tourism, sustainable development and women's empowerment in Anegundi, as well as preserving the architectural, cultural and living heritage of the Hampi World Heritage Site. The first project in 1997 created a cottage industry of crafts using locally produced cloth, banana fibre and river grass. It now employs over 600 women, and the attractive crafts produced are marketed in ethnic product outlets across India.

For the benefit of tourists, TKT has a team featuring some of the best guides in the region, who are fluent in English and know the terrain like the back of their hands. Exploring the region while riding pillion on their motorcycles can be a truly enriching experience. Guides charge ₹300/600 for a half/full day. Contact the trust for details.

14 hours). The 11pm *Hubli-Vasco Link Express* goes to Goa (sleeper ₹153, six hours).

Air

From Hubli's basic **airport**, Kingfisher Red flies to Mumbai (from ₹5500, 1½ hours), Hyderabad (from ₹6800, 3½ hours) and Bengaluru (from ₹5500, 1½ hours).

NORTHERN KARNATAKA

Badami

☎08357 / POP 25,800

Now in a shambles, scruffy Badami is a far cry from its glory days, when it was the capital of the mighty Chalukya empire. Between the 6th and 8th century AD, the Chalukya kings shifted the capital here from Aihole, with a satellite capital in Pattadakal. The relocation of power saw Badami gifted with several temples and, most importantly, a group of magnificent rock-cut cave temples, which are the main reason for coming to the village today.

History

From about AD 540 to 757, Badami was the capital of an enormous kingdom stretching from Kanchipuram in Tamil Nadu to the Narmada River in Gujarat. It eventually fell to the Rashtrakutas, and changed hands several times thereafter, with each dynasty sculpturally embellishing Badami in their own way.

The sculptural legacy left by the Chalukya artisans in Badami includes some of the earliest and finest examples of Dravidian temples and rock-cut caves. During Badami's heydays, Aihole and Pattadakal served as trial grounds for new temple architecture; the latter is now a World Heritage Site.

Sights

Cave Temples

CAVES

(Indian/foreigner ₹5/100; ☀dawn-dusk) Badami's highlight is its beautiful cave temples. Non-pushy and informed guides ask ₹200 for a tour of the caves, or ₹300 for the whole site. Watch out for pesky monkeys.

Cave one, 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 wall to the right of the porch is a captivating image of Nataraja striking 81 dance poses. On the right of the porch area is a huge figure of Ardhanarishvara. The right half of the figure shows features of Shiva, while the left half has aspects of his wife Parvati. On the opposite wall is a large image of Harihara; half Shiva and half Vishnu.

Dedicated to Vishnu, **cave two** 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 verandah, their tops 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.

Between the second and third caves are two sets of steps to the right. The first leads to a **natural cave**, where resident monkeys laze around. 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, carved in AD 578, has – on the left wall – a carving of Vishnu, to whom the

cave is dedicated, sitting on a snake. Nearby is an image of Varaha with four hands. The pillars have carved brackets in the shape of *yalis*. The ceiling panels contain images, including Indra riding an elephant, Shiva on a bull and Brahma on a swan.

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

Other Sights

HISTORIC SITES

Badami's caves overlook the 5th-century **Agastyatirtha Tank** and the waterside **Bhutanatha temples**. On the other side of the tank is an **archaeological museum** (admission ₹5; ☉10am-5pm Sat-Thu), which houses superb examples of local sculpture, including a remarkably explicit Lajja-Gauri image of a fertility cult that once flourished in the area. The stairway behind the museum climbs through a sandstone chasm and fortified gateways to reach the ruins of the **North Fort**.

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



Activities

The bluffs and the horseshoe-shaped red sandstone cliff of Badami offer some great low-altitude climbing. For more information, log on to www.dreamroutes.org.



Sleeping

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

Mookambika Deluxe

HOTEL \$

(☎220067; Station Rd; d ₹850-1100; ☹) Faux antique lampshades hang in the corridors of this friendly hotel, leading to comfy rooms done up in matte orange and green. It's Badami's de facto tourist office, and your best bet in town.

Hotel Mayura Chalukya

HOTEL \$

(☎220046; Ramdurg Rd; d from ₹600) A government issue buried behind civic offices away from the bustle, this renovated hotel has large and clean (though featureless) rooms. There's a decent restaurant serving Indian staples.

Hotel Rajsangam

HOTEL \$\$

(☎221991; www.hotelrajsangam.com; Station Rd; d Indian/foreigner from ₹800/US\$20; ☹☹) This midrange place has slightly stuffy rooms that go unchallenged in their class. It sits right opposite the bus stand, in a commercial complex packing in sundry other utilities.

Hotel New Satkar

HOTEL \$

(☎220417; Station Rd; d with/without AC ₹600/450; ☹) The best of the mediocre rooms in this budget dive are on the 1st floor. There was some refurbishing on during research, so things might have improved by now.

Hotel Badami Court

HOTEL \$\$

(☎220231; Station Rd; d incl breakfast from ₹3750; ☹☹) This luxury hotel sits amid a pastoral countryside 2km from town. Rooms are more functional than plush. Nonguests can use the pool for ₹150.



Eating

Banashree

INDIAN \$

(Station Rd; mains ₹70-90; ☉7am-10.30pm) The awesome North Indian thalis (₹80) at this busy and popular eatery in front of Hotel Rajsangam are tasty to the last morsel.

Golden Caves Cuisine

MULTICUISINE \$

(Station Rd; mains ₹70-100; ☉9am-11pm) A shabby place that produces palatable Indian, Chinese and Continental fare, and stocks ample chilled beer for its thirsty young clients.

Hotel Sanman

INDIAN \$

(Station Rd; mains ₹70-90; ☉10am-11.30pm) You might call it ropey, but it feels kind of nice to disappear behind a curtain in the booths and sip your beer in peace. The food is borderline.

Geeta Darshini

FAST FOOD \$

(Station Rd; snacks ₹15-20; ☉7am-9pm) Staple South Indian snacks are on endless demand here, washed down with milky tea.



Information

Station Rd, Badami's main street, has several hotels and restaurants; the old village is between this road and the caves. The **KSTDC tourist office** (☎220414; Ramdurg Rd; ☉10am-5.30pm Mon-Sat), adjoining Hotel Mayura Chalukya, is not very useful.

SBI has ATMs on Ramdurg Rd and Station Rd. Mookambika Deluxe hotel changes currency for guests, but at a lousy rate.

Internet is available at **Hotel Rajsangam** (Station Rd; per hr ₹20) in the town centre.

i Getting There & Away

Buses regularly shuffle off from Badami's **bus stand** on Station Rd to Gadag (₹52, two hours), which has connections to Bijapur, Bengaluru and Hubli. Three buses go direct to Hospet (₹155, six hours). The tarmac's rough down this lane; mind your bum.

Broad-gauge railway has finally arrived in Badami. The 7.35am *Bijapur Express* now runs to Bijapur (2nd class ₹120, 3½ hours), while the 2.30am Hubli Express goes to Hubli (2nd class ₹120, 3½ hours). For Bengaluru, take the 8pm *Gol Gumbaz Express* (2nd class ₹244, 13 hours).

i Getting Around

Frequent, on-time local buses make sightseeing in the area quite affordable. You can visit Aihole and Pattadakal in a day from Badami if you get moving early. Start with Aihole (₹20, one hour), then move to Pattadakal (₹15, 30 minutes), and finally return to Badami (₹18, one hour). The last bus from Pattadakal to Badami is at 5pm. Take food and water with you.

Taxis/autorickshaws cost around ₹1000/600 for a day trip to Pattadakal, Aihole and nearby Mahakuta. Badami's hotels can arrange taxis; alternatively, go to the **taxi stand** in front of the post office.

Around Badami

PATTADAKAL

A secondary capital of the Badami Chalukyas, Pattadakal is known for its group of **temples** (Indian/foreigner ₹10/250; ☀6am-6pm), which are collectively a World Heritage Site. Barring a few temples that date back to the 3rd century AD, most others in the group were built during the 7th and 8th centuries AD. Historians believe Pattadakal served as an important trial ground for the development of South Indian temple architecture.

Two main types of temple towers were tried out here. Curvilinear towers top the Kadasiddeshwara, Jambulinga and Galaganatha temples, while square roofs and receding tiers are used in the Mallikarjuna, Sangameshwara and Virupaksha temples.

The main **Virupaksha Temple** is a massive structure, its columns covered with intricate carvings depicting episodes from the Ramayana and Mahabharata. A giant stone sculpture of Nandi sits to the temple's east. The **Mallikarjuna Temple**, next to the Virupaksha Temple, is almost identical in design. About 500m south of the main enclosure is the Jain **Papanatha Temple**, its entrance flanked by elephant sculptures. The tem-

ple complex also serves as the backdrop to the annual Classical Dance Festival, held between January and February.

Pattadakal is 20km from Badami. See p886 for transport details.

AIHOLE

Some 100 temples, built between the 4th and 6th centuries AD, speck the ancient Chalukyan regional capital of Aihole (*ay-ho-leh*). Most, however, are either in ruins or engulfed by the modern village. Aihole documents the embryonic stage of South Indian Hindu architecture, from the earliest simple shrines, such as the most ancient Ladhkan Temple, to the later and more complex buildings, such as the Meguti Temple.

The most impressive of them all is the 7th-century **Durga Temple** (Indian/foreigner ₹5/100; ☀8am-6pm), notable for its semi-circular apse (inspired by Buddhist architecture) and the remains of the curvilinear *sikhara* (temple spire). The interiors house intricate stone carvings. The small **museum** (admission ₹5; ☀10am-5pm Sat-Thu) behind the temple contains further examples of Chalukyan sculpture.

To the south of the Durga Temple are several other temple clusters, including early examples such as the Gandar, Ladhkan, Kontigudi and Huchapaya groups - all pavilion type with slightly sloping roofs. About 600m to the southeast, on a low hillock, is the Jain **Meguti Temple**. Watch out for snakes if you're venturing up.

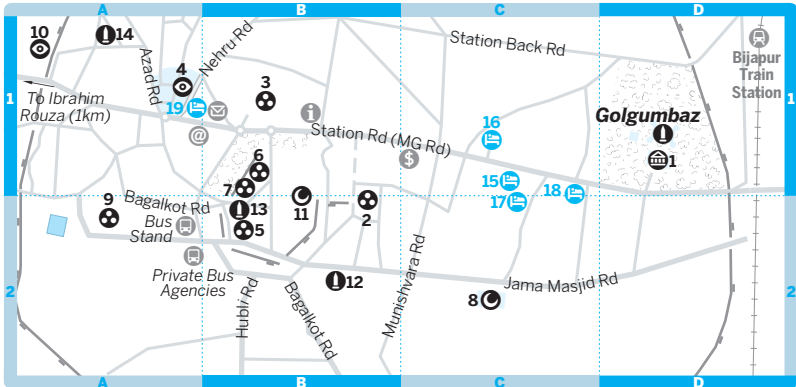
Aihole is about 40km from Badami. See p886 for transport information.

Bijapur

📍08352 / POP 253,900 / ELEV 593M

A fascinating open-air museum dating back to the Deccan's Islamic era, dusty Bijapur tells a glorious tale dating back some 600 years. Blessed with a heap of mosques, mausoleums, palaces and fortifications, it was the capital of the Adil Shahi kings from 1489 to 1686, and one of the five splinter states formed after the Islamic Bahmani kingdom broke up in 1482. Despite its strong Islamic character, Bijapur 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.

Bijapur's prime attractions, the Golgumbaz and the Ibrahim Rouza, are at opposite ends of town. Between them runs Station Rd (also



known as MG Rd), dotted with hotels and restaurants. The bus stand is a five-minute walk from Station Rd; the train station is 2km east of town.

Sights

Golgumbaz

MONUMENT

(Indian/foreigner ₹5/100, video ₹25; ☞6am-5.40pm) Set in tranquil gardens, the magnificent Golgumbaz is big enough to pull an optical illusion on you; despite the perfect engineering, you might just think it's ill-proportioned! Golgumbaz is actually a mausoleum, dating back to 1659, and houses the tombs of emperor Mohammed Adil Shah (r 1627–56), his two wives, his mistress (Rambha), one of his daughters and a grandson.

Octagonal seven-storey towers stand at each corner of the monument, which is capped by an enormous dome. An astounding 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' within the dome. An engineering marvel, its acoustics are such that if you whisper into the wall, a person on the opposite side of the gallery can hear you clearly. Unfortunately people like to test this out by hollering, so come early while most tourists are still snoozing.

Set in the lawns fronting the monument is a fantastic **archaeological museum** (admission ₹5; ☞10am-5pm Sat-Thu). Skip the ground floor and head upstairs; there you'll find an excellent collection of artefacts, such as Persian carpets, china crockery, weapons, armours, scrolls and objects of daily use, dating back to Bijapur's heyday.

Bijapur

Top Sights

Golgumbaz..... D1

Sights

- 1 Archaeological Museum D1
- 2 Asar Mahal B2
- 3 Bara Kaman B1
- 4 Central Market..... A1
- 5 Citadel B2
- 6 Gagan Mahal B1
- 7 Jala Manzil..... B1
- 8 Jama Masjid C2
- 9 Jod Gumbad A2
- 10 Malik-e-Maidan..... A1
- 11 Mecca Masjid B2
- 12 Mihtar Mahal..... B2
- 13 Sat Manzil..... B2
- 14 Upli Buruj..... A1

Sleeping

- 15 Hotel Kanishka International..... C1
- 16 Hotel Madhuvan International..... C1
- 17 Hotel Navaratna International C2
- 18 Hotel Pearl..... C1
- 19 Hotel Tourist A1

Eating

- Hotel Madhuvan International... (see 16)
 Kamat Restaurant (see 15)
 Swapna Lodge Restaurant (see 19)

Ibrahim Rouza

MONUMENT

(Indian/foreigner ₹5/100, video ₹25; ☞6am-6pm) The beautiful Ibrahim Rouza is among the most elegant and finely proportioned Islamic monuments in India. Its tale is rather

poignant: the monument was built by emperor Ibrahim Adil Shah II (r 1580–1627) as a future mausoleum for his queen, Taj Sultana. Ironically, he died before her, and was thus the first person to be rested there. Interred here with Ibrahim Adil Shah and his queen are his daughter, his two sons, and his mother, Haji Badi Sahiba.

Unlike the Golgumbaz, noted for its immense size, the emphasis here is on grace and architectural finery. Its 24m-high minarets are said to have inspired those of the Taj Mahal. For a tip (₹150 is fine), caretakers will show you around the monument, including the dark labyrinth around the catacomb where the actual graves are located.

Citadel

FORT

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

MOSQUE

(Jama Masjid Rd; ☉9am–5.30pm) Constructed by Ali Adil Shah I (r 1557–80), the finely proportioned Jama Masjid has graceful arches, a fine dome and a vast inner courtyard with room for more than 2200 worshippers. You can take a silent walk through its assembly hall, which still retains some of the elaborate murals. Women should make sure to cover their heads and not wear revealing clothing.

Other Sights

HISTORIC SITES

On the eastern side of the citadel is the tiny, walled **Mecca Masjid**, presumably built in the early 17th century. Some speculate that this mosque may have been for women. Further east, the **Asar Mahal**, built by Mohammed Adil Shah in about 1646 to serve as a Hall of Justice, once housed two strands of Prophet Mohammed's beard. The rooms on the upper storey are decorated with frescoes and a square tank graces the front. It's out of bounds for women. The stained but richly

decorated **Mihtar Mahal** to the south serves as an ornamental gateway to a small mosque.

Upli Buruj is a 24m-high 16th-century watchtower near the city's western walls. An external flight of stairs leads to the top, mounted with two hefty cannons. 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 supposedly brought to Bijapur as a war trophy thanks to the efforts of 10 elephants, 400 oxen and hundreds of men!

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.

Don't forget to spend a few hours in Bijapur's colourful **central market**, with its spice sellers, florists and tailors.

Sleeping

Hotel Pearl

HOTEL \$

(☎256002; Station Rd; d from ₹550; ☹) As good as it gets for Bijapur, this excellent hotel features clean and bright rooms around a central atrium. It's very close to Golgumbaz. Ask for a room to the rear to avoid street noise.

Hotel Kanishka International

HOTEL \$

(☎223788; Station Rd; s/d from ₹550/700; ☹) One of Bijapur's trusted options, this place has spacious and clean rooms, some with balconies. There's a small gym for guests' use, and the dealmaker is the excellent vegetarian restaurant downstairs. Book early.

Hotel Madhuvan International

HOTEL \$

(☎255571; Station Rd; d ₹600–1000; ☹) Hidden down a lane off Station Rd, this pleasant hotel boasts lime-green walls, tinted windows and an amiable management. It's generally quiet and peaceful, but watch out for those boisterous wedding receptions often thrown at the garden restaurant.

Hotel Navaratna International

HOTEL \$

(☎222771; Station Rd; d from ₹700; ☹) Bijapur's cheapest AC rooms are on offer at this well-managed hotel off Station Rd, with paintings à la Kandinsky and Chagall decorating the lobby. Rooms are sparkling clean, with shiny floor tiles.

Hotel Tourist

HOTEL \$

(☎250655; Station Rd; d ₹190–350) Bang in the middle of the bazaar, with scrawny (but clean) rooms. Service is apathetic, so bring that DIY manual along.

Hotel Shashinag Residency HOTEL \$\$
(☎260344; www.hotelshashinagresidency.com; Sholapur-Chitradurga Bypass Rd; s/d incl breakfast ₹2250/2750; 🍷🍷) Consider this place only if you can't do without a swimming pool or a snooker parlour. It's about 2km away from town.

🍴 Eating & Drinking

Kamat Restaurant SOUTH INDIAN \$
(Station Rd; mains ₹60-80; ☺9am-11pm) Below Hotel Kanishka International, this popular joint serves diverse South Indian snacks and meals, including an awesome thali bursting with regional flavours.

Swapna Lodge Restaurant PUB \$
(Station Rd; mains ₹80-100; ☺noon-11pm) It's two floors up a dingy staircase next to Hotel Tourist, and has good grub, cold beer and a 1970s lounge feel. Its open-air terrace is a pleasant lounging spot, albeit a little noisy with maddening traffic below.

Hotel Madhuvan International INDIAN \$
(Station Rd; mains ₹60-80; ☺9am-11pm) Try the yummy *masala dosa* or the never-ending North Indian thalis dished out here by waiters in red turbans. The downside is that there's no alcohol on offer.

In the bustling market around Gandhi Circle on MG Rd, you'll find countless stalls flogging local snacks, roasted corn-on-the-cob, fresh fruits and sweetmeats such as *pedha* and *kalakandh*.

📍 Information

Cyber Park (Station Rd; per hr ₹20; ☺9am-10pm) Internet access.

Royal Internet Café (Station Rd, below Hotel Pearl; per hr ₹20; ☺9am-10pm) Internet access.

State Bank of India (Station Rd; ☺10.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-1.30pm Sat) Changes foreign currency and is super-efficient.

Tourist office (☎250359; Station Rd; ☺10am-5.30pm Mon-Sat) A poorly serviced office in the shabby Hotel Mayura Adil Shahi Annexe.

📍 Getting There & Away

Bus

From the **bus stand**, two early-morning buses run direct to Bidar (₹180, seven hours). Ordinary buses head frequently to Gulbarga (₹104, four hours) and Hubli (₹160, six hours). There are buses to Bengaluru (ordinary/sleeper ₹360/580, 12 hours, seven daily) via Hospet (₹148, five hours), Hyderabad (ordinary/semiduluxe ₹239/348, 11

hours, five daily) and Mumbai (₹414, 12 hours, two daily) via Pune (₹293, 10 hours).

Train

From **Bijapur train station**, express trains go to Sholapur (2nd class ₹80, 2½ hours, three daily), Bengaluru (sleeper/2AC ₹288/1135, 17 hours, three daily), Mumbai (2nd class ₹149; 12 hours, four weekly) and Hyderabad (sleeper ₹121, 14 hours, one daily).

📍 Getting Around

Autorickshaws are expensive in Bijapur, so be prepared to haggle. ₹80 should get you from the train station to the town centre. Between the Golgumbaz and Ibrahim Rouza they cost about ₹50, unless you share with locals (₹10). Tonga drivers are eager for business but charge around the same. Autorickshaw drivers ask for about ₹350 for a sightseeing trip.

Bidar

☎08482 / POP 174,200 / ELEV 664M

Tucked away in Karnataka's far northeastern corner, Bidar is a little gem that most travellers choose to ignore, and no one quite knows why. At most an afterthought on some itineraries, this old walled town – first the capital of the Bahmani kingdom (1428–87) and later the capital of the Barid Shahi dynasty – is drenched in history. That apart, it is home to some amazing ruins and monuments, including the colossal Bidar Fort, the largest in South India. Wallowing in neglect, Bidar sure commands more than the cursory attention it gets today.

📍 Sights

Bidar Fort

FORT

(☺dawn-dusk) Keep aside a few hours for peacefully wandering around the remnants of this magnificent 15th-century fort. Sprawled across rolling hills 2km east of Udgir Rd, it was once the administrative capital of much of southern India. Surrounded by a triple moat hewn out of solid red rock and 5.5km of defensive walls (the second longest in India), the fort has a fairy-tale entrance that twists in an elaborate chicanery 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 Khamba Mosque** (Sixteen-Pillared Mosque). There's also a small **museum** (admission free; ☺9am-5pm) in the former royal bath. Clerks at the **archaeological office**

beside the museum often double as guides. For a small tip (₹150 is fine), they can show you many hidden places within the fort which otherwise remain locked.

Bahmani Tombs

HISTORIC SITE

(☉dawn-dusk) The huge domed tombs of the Bahmani kings in Ashtur, 3km east of Bidar, have a desolate, moody beauty that strikes a strange harmony with the rolling 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 Bahman's tomb is the most impressive, and is regularly prayed in.

About 500m prior to reaching the tombs, to the left of the road, is **Choukhandi** (admission free; ☉dawn-dusk), the serene mausoleum of Sufi saint Syed Kirmani Baba, who travelled here from Persia during the golden age of the Bahmani empire. An uncanny air of calm hangs within the monument, and its polygonal courtyard houses rows of medieval graves, amid which women in hijab sit quietly and murmur inaudible prayers. You are welcome to sit in or walk around, and soak up the ambience.

Both places are best visited early in the day, as it's difficult to find transport back to Bidar after dark.

Other Sights

HISTORIC SITES

Dominating the heart of the old town are the ruins of **Khwaja Mahmud Gawan Madrasa** (admission free; ☉dawn-dusk), a college for advanced learning built in 1472 by Mahmud Gawan, then chief minister of the empire. It was later used as an armoury by Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, when a gunpowder explosion ripped the building in half. To get an idea of its former grandeur, check out the remnants of coloured tiles on the front gate and one of the minarets which still stands intact.

Scattered around the town's bus stand are a handful of magnificent but forgotten **royal tombs**, including those of Ali Barid and his son Kasim Barid.

Sleeping & Eating

Hotel Mayura

HOTEL \$

(☎228142; Udgir Rd; d from ₹400; ☹) Smart and friendly, with cheerful and well-appointed rooms, this is clearly the best hotel to camp in Bidar. It's bang opposite the bus stand, and there's an excellent **bar-restaurant** on the ground floor.

Hotel Mayura Barid Shahi

HOTEL \$

(☎221740; Udgir Rd; d from ₹350; ☹) Otherwise featureless with simple, minimalist rooms (service is OK, though), this place scores due to its central location. The lovely garden **bar-restaurant** to the rear brims over with joy and merriment every evening.

Sapna International

HOTEL \$

(☎220991; Udgir Rd; d from ₹400; ☹) This place is let down by slightly stiff service, but the rooms are just about fine for the price. In its favour are the two restaurants: the pure-veg Kamat and the nonveg Atithi, which offers meat dishes and booze (mains ₹80 to ₹100).

Nisarga Restaurant

INDIAN \$

(Papanash Lake; mains ₹60-100; ☉noon-10pm) For a truly memorable meal, head out of town to the edge of placid Papanash Lake, where you can relish a train of local dishes and mash-ups (the pea and mushroom curry is yummy) in this laid-back restaurant under a shady tree. A return autorickshaw with waiting time would cost you about ₹100, but the extra expense is worth every penny.

Rasganga

SOUTH INDIAN \$

(Udgir Rd, mains ₹30-50; ☉9am-10pm) A tasty South Indian thali (₹37) is on offer at this busy eatery located within the Hotel Mayura Barid Shahi complex.

Information

The modern town centre is along Udgir Rd, down which you will also find the bus station.

HDFC Bank (Udgir Rd) ATM opposite Sapna International.

Nisarga Internet (per hr ₹20; ☉9am-9pm) Internet access near Sapna International.

Getting There & Away

From the **bus stand**, frequent buses run to Gulbarga (₹75, three hours), which is connected to Mumbai and Bengaluru. Buses also go to Hyderabad (₹103, four hours), Bijapur (₹180, seven hours) and Bengaluru (semideluxe/AC ₹359/580, 12 hours).

The train station, around 1km southwest of the bus stand, has services to Hyderabad (sleeper ₹120, five hours, three daily) and Bengaluru (sleeper ₹280, 17 hours, one daily).

Getting Around

Rent a bicycle at **Sami Cycle Taxi** (Basveshwar Circle; per day ₹20; ☉10am-10pm) against your proof of identity. Or simply arrange a day tour in an autorickshaw for around ₹350.

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