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SCRIPT YOUR ADVENTURE in KARNATAKA

WILDLIFE • WATERSPORTS • TREKS • ACTIVITIES

This guide is researched and written by
Supriya Sehgal



Contents

PLAN YOUR TRIP	4
Adventures in Karnataka	6
Need to Know	10
10 Top Experiences	14
7 Days of Action	20
BEST TRIPS	22
Bengaluru, Ramanagara & Nandi Hills	24
Detour: Bheemeshwari & Galibore Nature Camps	44
Chikkamagaluru	46
Detour: River Tern Lodge	53
Kodagu (Coorg)	54
Hampi, Badami & Around	68
Coastal Karnataka	78
Detour: Agumbe	86
Dandeli & Jog Falls	90
Detour: Castle Rock	94
Bandipur & Nagarhole	100
Detour: BRT Wildlife Sanctuary	106
Index	108
Acknowledgements	112



Plan Your Trip

- Adventures in Karnataka 6
- Need to Know 10
- 10 Top Experiences.....14
- 7 Days of Action.....20

The hanging rock at Avalabetta is a popular sunrise spot near Bengaluru

Adventures in Karnataka

With frothy rivers that call out to rafters, a sweeping coastline for surfers, and dense shola forests and grasslands carpeting the hillsides, Karnataka's outdoor theatre is never short of action. Whatever your level of experience, there are abundant terrains and trip operators to guide you in excursions, whether on land, water, or air, in the state. All you need is a spirit of adventure.

ON YOUR FEET

The Kannada word 'betta' (mountain) will soon become part of your lexicon if you are a trekker or hiker. The Western Ghats are a prime location for nimble-footed explorations, with various levels of difficulty. These mountains feature a mix of gentle slopes and steep ascents, but they are ubiquitously blessed with awe-inspiring biodiversity so there is something for the eyes as well. Chikkamagaluru, Kodagu (Coorg), and the lower Nandi Hills closer to Bengaluru are popular trekking locations. Mullayanagiri (1930m) in Chikkamagaluru is the highest peak in the state, followed by Kudremukh (1894m) in the same region. In Kodagu (Coorg), Tadiandamol (1748m) is the highest peak, reached after braving dense thickets and low grasslands on the steep ascent.

Gokarna has a thriving surfing scene

RIVERS GALORE

For those who like their scenery with a side of adrenaline, several mountain streams coursing amid lush environs offer challenging routes for whitewater rafting and kayaking, especially in the Kali, Barapole, and Kaveri rivers. The most popular rafting destinations include Dandeli in the jungles of the Western Ghats and the gushing waters of the Upper Barapole (Kithu-Kakkatu River) in Kodagu. If you like your water experiences to be more gentle, you can enjoy coracle (round basket-like boats) rides at Bheemeshwari and Galibore jungle camps on the Kaveri River, an easy distance from Bengaluru.

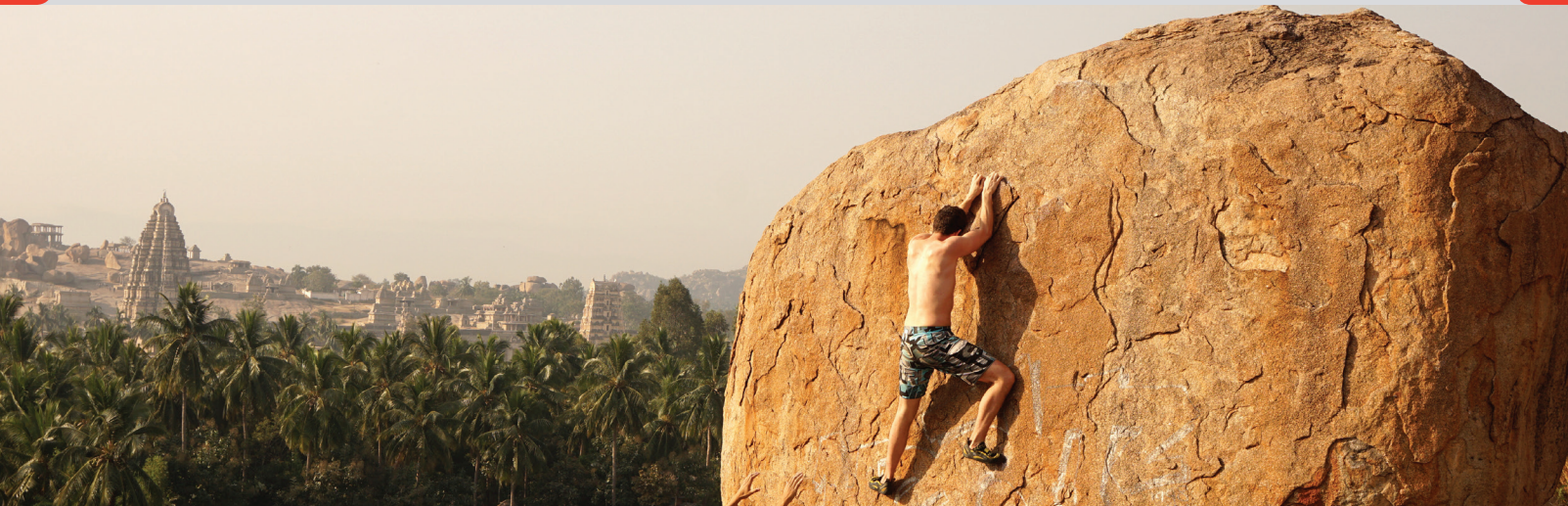
COASTAL CHARISMA

Scuba divers and snorkellers rejoice: Karnataka's clutch of clean sandy beaches skirt coral-covered shorelines with a magnificent underwater world of marine creatures and flora. The northern coastal edge of the state is particularly excellent for under-sea explorations. The crystal-clear waters of Netrani Island beckon scuba divers, Karwar offers not only snorkelling but the chance to spot dolphins, while Gokarna and Mulki near Mangaluru are the state's surfing hotspots.

HEIGHTS TO CONQUER

Providing a starkly imposing counterpoint to Karnataka's cornucopia of green is an alternative terrain of boulderscapes and craggy outcrops. This is where climbers and bouldering enthusiasts go to scout uncharted rocks and up their game for agility and balance. Hampi and Badami are





The boulders of Hampi are a challenge for climbers from all over the world

the most popular spots amongst seasoned and new climbers. Closer to Bengaluru, Ramanagara is where Gabbar of *Sholay* had his cinematic den, and which today serves as a popular weekend destination for adventurous Bangaloreans who want to literally scale new heights. Incidentally, the state's best known name in climbing is Jyothi Raj (also known as 'Kothi Raj' or 'Monkey King'). He has a reputation for defying heights, and is famous for scaling the Chitradurga Fort without a harness and as the only person to have scaled Jog Falls, Karnataka's highest waterfall at 253m.

THRILLS ON WHEELS

Karnataka has always been home to a vibrant motorcycling community with excellent urban sightseeing routes to epic adventures in off the beaten tracks in the wilderness. Motorcycling clubs with decades under their belt have been encouraging and growing the community for years. Cycling came in later to the scene but has taken Bengaluru and other cities by storm. A number of cycling outfits with well-curated routes and back-up vehicles allow the traveller to see the state at a different pace. Quad and dirt biking may be restricted to a few enthusiasts, but it is catching up with a number of venues in the state. The Western Ghats offer a thrilling topography as well as a refreshing backdrop for a trip. Even car

rallying is not restricted to experts anymore. Bengaluru flagged off rally events a number of years ago with easy time and distance (not speed) events for amateurs.

JUNGLE SAFARIS

Nearly 40,000 sq km of dense forests, bursting with a rich diversity of flora and fauna, grace Karnataka. Much of this jungle landscape is concentrated in the Nilgiris biosphere, comprising the Western Ghats (a UNESCO World Heritage Site). There are five national parks in the state that offer a tryst with the wild inhabitants of the thick foliage and green canopy. Of these, the Bandipur and Nagarhole national parks are most popular with travellers looking to spot Bengal tigers, leopards, Indian gaur, and elephants. Others include Anshi National Park, Banerghatta, and Kudremukh.

ABOVE IT ALL

For those interested in a bird's-eye view of Karnataka's landscape, paramotoring and parasailing are on the menu thanks to a number of operators in the state. Relatively new to the mix is microlight flying and hot-air ballooning. The most reliable place to experience this is Jakkur Flying Club in Bengaluru.

Need to Know

Karnataka has something for every adventure-seeker—from the classic pursuits of hiking and rafting to more niche activities such as bouldering and flying tandem on a microlight. Here are some guidelines to make your trip smoother.



Kayaking at Galibore Nature Camp

WHEN TO GO

Karnataka is home to a number of destinations with pleasant weather all year round, including Bengaluru, Chikkamagaluru and Kodagu. Coastal and central Karnataka can get uncomfortably hot in the summer months.

- **October—March (high season):** The coolest months, and therefore ideal for outdoor activities such as trekking and cycling, with moderate temperatures that stay in the vicinity of 20–28°C. It's also the best time for rafting at Dandeli. Nights can get chilly, especially in the hills.
- **April—May (low season):** These are the warmest months of the state with temperatures ranging from 22–36°C. It's best to avoid strenuous outdoor activities such as trekking and bouldering at this time. However,

i Quick Facts

LANGUAGES

The main language spoken in the state is Kannada but travellers can get by with Hindi and English.

MONEY

Most cities are well-equipped with ATMs, but cash is best for small payments and in smaller locations.

CONNECTIVITY

Mid- to high-end hotels offer wi-fi; some levy a charge. Expect to be off the grid at remote locations for rafting, trekking, or surfing. Mobile signals may also be sporadic in remote locations.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Registered tourism offices are all over the state, with the main ones in Bengaluru: Department of Tourism, Government of Karnataka and Karnataka State Tourism Development Corporation. Visit www.karnatakaturism.org and www.kstcd.co for more details.

the pre-monsoon and monsoon period of May through September is popular for surfing, due to impressive swells.

- **June—September (mid-season):** The monsoon months are not a deterrent to travel, with temperatures remaining between 22–36°C. The post-monsoon period (August and September) is also suitable for rafting on the Kaveri River. Trekking, water sports and microlight/paramotoring may be a challenge at this time, though. Check for clear days.

WHAT TO PACK

- **Prescribed medication:** Cities have plenty of hospitals and pharmacies, but carry enough prescribed medication for your entire trip.
- **Adventure gear:** You can bring your own equipment for the activity of your choice, though renting (p13) is also an option.
- **Clothing and shoes:** Pack light cotton garments for the day, and a jacket for the night (in case of winter) when travelling to Bengaluru or Kodagu. Full-sleeve shirts and long pants help protect from mosquitoes. Sturdy footwear that takes wear and tear well and thoroughly protects your feet is also a must for any activity-based vacation.



Adventure tour operators

Jungles Lodges & Resorts (JLR; ☎080 40554055; www.junglulodges.com):

An excellent choice for adventure activities, accommodation, and wildlife safaris at Karnataka's many sanctuaries and reserves.

My Eco Trip (www.myecotrip.com) A Karnataka Forest Department initiative, this is an excellent (and cost-effective) option for booking nature treks, especially around Bengaluru and in Chikkamagaluru. They are set to add jungle stays, wildlife safaris, and visits to bird sanctuaries to their repertoire, so keep an eye on the website.

General Thimayya National Academy of Adventure (GETHNA; ☎080 22210454; www.gethnaa.com) Sign up for aero, aqua and terrestrial outdoor activities with seasoned guides in different parts of Karnataka.

BMC Adventures (☎96111 02222; www.bmcadventures.com): Offers long treks and easy hikes in the state and beyond.

WildXcape (☎96294 09087; www.facebook.com/pg/wildxcape): Sign up for fixed date departures for Karnataka hikes and treks.

Get Beyond Limits (☎080 88004404; getbeyondlimits.com): Treks and camping trips.

Mystic Wild (☎082 77392112; www.facebook.com/pg/mysticwild.in): Has a range of outdoor activities, including wildlife trips.

• **Sunscreen, headgear, and sunglasses:** Protection from the sun is required both in winter and summer.

• **Original photo identity card:** All hotels need a valid photo ID card.

ACCOMMODATION

Karnataka has wide range of hotels and homestays. For adventure-lovers, nothing beats the off-the-beaten-track properties of the state government-run **Jungle Lodges & Resorts** (www.junglulodges.com). They're great options if you want an all-in-one package of staying, eating, excursions, and activities. The rates in this book are for AC double rooms (d) and suites (ste) and do not include taxes or breakfast unless specified otherwise.

₹: Below ₹2000

₹₹: ₹2000–5000

₹₹₹: Above ₹5000

EATING

Karnataka is justifiably famous for its cuisine(s), ranging from a variety of *dosas* and *idlis* pretty much everywhere, to sensational seafood along the coast, to distinctively fresh Malnad and Kodava preparations in the hills.

In the bigger cities, vintage restaurants, branded chains, and atmospheric pubs and cafes abound. In remote locations, street style eateries and authentic fare in homestays are a window into the state's culinary culture. Eateries in this book have been assigned the following rate categories, based on the price of main dishes for two.

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

DOS AND DON'TS

Do

- Sign up with a reputed adventure outfit for activities.
- Carry and use proper footwear and gear.
- Follow safety rules religiously.
- Check with adventure operators about height/weight/age limitations.
- Wear modest clothing inside religious places.
- Carry a hand sanitiser for public or restaurant toilets.
- Discuss per day/per km rates for guides, cab and auto drivers beforehand.
- Give back to the local economy by using home-grown accommodations and services.

Don't

- Expect clean loos with toilet paper in small restaurants.
- Use cameras inside temple sanctums.
- Take unnecessary risks during adventure excursions.
- Litter. Instead, carry back any trash you generate in locations that do not have disposal facilities.



Top Tip: Renting and buying gear

Appropriate footwear, apparel and gear is essential for any adventure activity. While most companies will equip you well, here are some recommended shops for renting and/or buying.

- **India Hikes** (☎080 46801269; www.indiahikes.com): Buy or rent.
- **Decathlon** (www.decathlon.in): There are 14 stores in the state including Bengaluru, Mysuru, and Hubli. The most popular store in Bengaluru is in Sarjapur (☎95387 12550).
- **Wildcraft** (www.wildcraft.com): Headquartered in Bengaluru, there are several stores in the city to buy gear. Find the closest one on their site. For those who prefer shopping online, **Outdoor Travel Gear** (www.outdoortravelgear.com) has a wide selection.

10 Top Experiences

1 RAFTING ON THE KALI RIVER

Rafting on the Kali River at forested Dandeli (p92) in north Karnataka is as soul-satisfying as it is gut-churning. The stretch houses Grade 2 and 3 rapids, which graduate to even more during the monsoons (best avoided at this time for safety reasons). Skilled instructors and outfits offer tours that require you to reserve a whole day, where you are transferred to a camp site, geared up, and given instructions. Then off you go down the frothy rapids for an exhilarating experience. While there are several other excellent rafting destinations on the Barapole and Kaveri rivers, the rapids and unparalleled beauty of the Kali make it a must in the adventure traveller's list.



2 TREKS GALORE

Whether you are an expert, beginner, or something in between, Karnataka is sure to have the right trek for you. In Chikkamagaluru, the Mullayanagiri trek (p48) to the state's highest peak (1930m) offers spectacular views, while the Kudremukh trek (p48) through forests and grasslands is a test of your will power and agility. Another thrilling trekking experience, more suitable for beginners, is the Tadiandamol trek (p59) that starts in dense coffee plantations and takes you to the highest peak in Kodagu. For those who



have an affinity for relatively uncharted trails, the Karnataka Eco-Tourism Development Board and Karnataka Forest Department have launched a useful website called My Eco Trip (www.myecotrip.com) where you can book guided ecocentric treks around Bengaluru and in Chikkamagaluru.

3 SURFING IN MULKI

If you want to catch a wave far from too-often-trodden waters, then Ashram Surf Retreat (p80) is a great option. Located in the bucolic village of Mulki it doubles up as a yoga getaway, with great access to the point breaks off the village. Local children, well integrated into the surfing community, can often be spotted riding the tropical waves that crash onto the sand. While you do have to follow precautions, the spot is largely safe with no dangerous rip currents.





4 REACH DIZZYING HEIGHTS IN BENGALURU

Go up, up, and away—not cocooned in a closed aircraft but in a semi-open microlight. Enjoy the wind and spectacular views of the city below by signing up for a microlight ride at the Jakkur Flying Club (p26). If you prefer your views with something to munch on, then consider Fly Dining (p39), where gourmet food meets extreme adventure. Patrons get to enjoy a meal suspended 160ft off the ground on an open-air deck with 22 guests around the table, three chefs, a waiter, and a safety inspector (everyone is strapped to safety harnesses and there's a net at the bottom). A crane hauls up everyone slowly, affording views of an ever-diminishing city. Once at the highest point, individual seats can be rotated 360 degrees for a full view.

5 CYCLING TOURS

Karnataka is a cycling paradise with a varied terrain dominated by lush emerald hills, opaque rainforests, and a striking coastline. Cyclists get to combine their test of endurance with views of tidy hedges around village homes and dramatic vistas of undulating hills, or feel sea breezes caressing their hair as they pedal along the coastline. Sign up for curated trips, such



as those offered by Unvented (p26), wheeling out of Bengaluru to meet the countryside, and routes that include skirting the Arabian Sea, looping around Agumbe's rainforest patches, and seeing local life at close quarters. Multiple outfits offer heritage routes with historical pitstops and immersive local experiences as well.

6 GALIBORE NATURE CAMP

A comfortable drive of 100km from Bengaluru, Galibore Nature Camp (p44) is a delightful surprise tucked away between the Kaveri River and the forests of the Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary. Get an easy adventure fix here, with guided activities like trekking, cycling, coracle rides, nature walks, to pick from. You can spot plenty of wildlife too, including spotted deer, crocodiles, and birds galore. There are day trip packages as well as the option to stay overnight in comfortable Swiss tents—ideal for a weekend with children.





7 MOTORCYCLING EXCURSIONS

The biking culture in Karnataka, especially Bengaluru, is at full throttle, with a number of active biking groups and clubs—Bangalore Motorcycle Club, Bangalore Bikers, India Bull Riders, R15 Riders Club, Bikerni (for women), Yamaha Riders Club and Bangalore Jawa Yezdi Motorcycle Club are just some of the popular names. Sharing camaraderie, expertise and adventures, the groups encourage weekend rides and long tours in the state. You can hire a motorcycle from **Wicked Ride** (☎080 46801054; wickedride.com) and head out with a group or on your own.



8 SCUBA DIVING OFF MURUDESHWAR

The northern edge of Karnataka is home to Murudeshwar, where a tall Shiva statue housed in an exquisite temple, shadows the fishing village below. For adventure travellers, the spiritual bliss comes from visiting the heart-shaped Netrani Island (p84) about 20km off the shore for a tryst with the underwater creatures. The visibility is much better than most other destinations in India, so doing recreational dives with PADI-certified instructors offers a chance to spot coral fish, butterfly fish, tiger fish, Napoleon wrasse, scorpion fish, honeycomb moray eels, red toothed trigger fish, and other exotic creatures.

9 CAMPING AT HARANGI DAM BACKWATERS

The solitude of the outdoors, crisp clean air, and the chance to wake up to the soothing sight of forest and water—these are the antidotes to city life afforded at the backwaters of the Harangi Dam (p60), just off Kushalnagar in Kodagu. The little known 3-acre personal camping spot is part of Eco Habitat Homestay (p67) and a perfect way to get back to the basics. A coffee estate, bamboo thickets, and tranquil waters skirt the property which is well cut off from the main road. Few places in Kodagu allow camping and this one definitely tops the list with the soothing view of the backwaters.



10 SPOT WILDLIFE OFF KABINI RIVER LODGE

Kabini River Lodge (www.junglelodges.com) at Nagarhole National Park (p102) charms with its old-world appeal, and offers a range of authentic wildlife and nature experiences. Among the list of activities here is a short ride on a coracle, a round basket-like boat. Your boatman will point out resident birds of the region (and maybe a crocodile or two) as you rock and roll along with the rhythms of the river in your seemingly precarious vessel. If boating isn't for you, take a safari into Nagarhole Forest, the erstwhile hunting grounds of the Maharaja of Mysore, where you might even spot a tiger.



7 Days of Action

If you want to get a taste of several different adventure activities while also experiencing a variety of scenic locations, this seven-day itinerary—which includes a hike, safari, and a stint in the skies—will deliver the goods.

DAY 1

Arrive in Bengaluru and sign up for a micro-light flying session at Jakkur airfield (p26). Note that the activity is weather dependent and can be done only on clear days. Reserve the rest of the day marvelling at your feat and exploring the rest of the city. Alternatively, you could even try your hand at climbing at the indoor Equilibrium Climbing Station (p26); it's a good place to practise if you plan to go bouldering at destinations such as Ramanagara (p31) or Badami (p72).

DAY 2

Sign up with Unventured (p26) for a short cycle ride to Nandi Hills (p32) and the areas around. This is ideal for beginner level cyclists as well, and there's a back-up van following in case of an emergency. The stunning countryside, the ancient Bhoga Nandeeshwara Temple and the village at the base of Nandi Hill are additional charms to the bends as you go up. Cycling is a great

The vertiginous viewing platform at Nandi Hills



way to get oriented to not only Bengaluru but also to immerse yourself in the surrounding countryside. Art of Bicycle Trips (p32) also offers cycling trips to Ramanagara.

DAY 3

Drive from Bengaluru on Mysuru Road (perhaps stopping at Ramanagara to sign up for a short bouldering experience) and head towards Kodagu, taking in fields, village homes, and eventually, the coffee-clad hills. Head to the base of Tadiandamol Peak (p59) and set up base at a homestay so you can start climbing early the next morning.

DAY 4

Start early on this day for the Tadiandamol trek. It takes only about four to five hours and can be done without an instructor. Thick shola forest patches are broken by clear grasslands. The last part of the trek is steep but awards excellent views of the valley once you're up.

DAY 5

Drive for about 70km eastwards to arrive at the Barapole rafting region (p56) in Kodagu. Book yourself in a homestay close to Srimangala for comfortable access to rafting the next day.

DAY 6

Spend the first half of the day in the company of the Barapole River and the wilderness around. After getting your thrills on the rapids, head to Bandipur National Park (p102), which is about 100km from here. Settle in for the night at a forest-adjacent accommodation.

DAY 7

Sign up for an early morning and afternoon safari to increase your chances of spotting wild animals such as elephants, leopards, the Indian gaur, and if you're lucky, the striped cat. Leave in the evening to reach Bengaluru late in the night.

TOP CHOICE Tour of the Nilgiris

The decade-old **Tour of the Nilgiris** (TFN; www.tourofnilgiris.com) is one of India's largest and best-loved cycling annual events. The tour spans more than 850km, wending through hills, wildlife sanctuaries, and cultural hotspots of the state. It is one of the best ways to see Karnataka, provided your legs and energy reserves can match your enthusiasm.



Best Trips

Bengaluru, Ramanagara & Nandi Hills	24
Detour: Bheemeshwari & Galibore Nature Camps	44
Chikkamagaluru	46
Detour: River Tern Lodge	53
Kodagu (Coorg)	54
Hampi, Badami & Around	68
Coastal Karnataka	78
Detour: Agumbe	86
Dandeli & Jog Falls	90
Detour: Castle Rock	94
Bandipur & Nagarhole	100
Detour: BRT Wildlife Sanctuary ...	106

A view of Virupaksha Temple from atop a boulder at Hampi



BENGALURU, RAMANAGARA & NANDI HILLS

Why Go?

Bengaluru is a busy metro, but it also has a thriving adventure scene encompassing trekking, cycling, biking, motorsports, flying, and more. Just a stone's throw away the ancient granite outcrops of Ramanagara beckon climbers, verdant Nandi Hills boasts the best cycling route off Bengaluru, and the Kaveri River calls out to rafters.

Quick Facts

GETTING AROUND

Bus: There is a comprehensive local bus network, operated by the Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTc; www.mybmtc.com), with a useful website for timetables and fares.

Metro: Namma Metro has two lines covering more than 40 stations.

Taxi: The most flexible way to explore the city and its surrounds. Cabs cost ₹1200 for 8 hrs/80km. Ramanagara and Nandi Hills are 48km and 56km from Bengaluru respectively, and both are well connected by bus.

GREAT FOR



TOP PICKS

- **Microlight flying (p26):** Get high in Bengaluru
- **Cycling to Nandi Hills (p33):** A rewarding day trip.
- **Bouldering in Ramanagara (p31):** Learn the ropes and climb.
- **Sunrise treks (p34):** Take your pick from multiple destinations.
- **Galibore Nature Camp (p44):** Kayaking on the Kaveri.

Shivanasamudra Waterfalls is one of many nature getaways near Bengaluru

🕒 Activities & sights

BENGALURU

Aerosports

Jakkur airfield in Yelahanka is the take-off point for recreational air activities such as microlight flights (semi-open two-seaters), riding in a Cessna, paramotoring, and parasailing. It's an exhilarating way to get a bird's-eye view of the city. Hot-air ballooning is another option—it's a rather sedate experience but a fun way to get kids acquainted with the skies in a relatively gentle way.

All activities are weather dependent and may have weight and height restrictions. Most take place early in

A cycling excursion along the countryside



the morning for wind saliency.

📞90350 03434; www.myflying.in; per person rates: microlight 10/20/30mins ₹3300/6500/8500; Cessna 15/30mins ₹5000/10,000; paramotoring ₹2500; parasailing ₹750

Bouldering & climbing

Given that Karnataka is one of the climbing hubs of the country with top spots such as the rocky terrains of Hampi, Chitradurga, and Badami, in-city fun includes international standard climbing walls, where one can warm up for a more elemental experience. The bouldering gym **Equilibrium Climbing** (📞886168 4444; www.equilibriumclimbing.com) is one of the largest facilities in the country spread over 3300sq ft. It offers long courses as well as weekend training programmes.

Other climbing pads include **Mars Adventures** (📞98866 64666; www.marsclimbing.com) with three locations in the city and **Urban Climbers** (📞96200 00222; www.urbanclimbers.in).

Cycling excursions

There's nothing quite like exploring Bengaluru on a cycle at an easy pace, especially if you take a guided tour to explore the city's history and culture, neighbourhood by neighbourhood. We are particularly fond of the curated day tours offered by **Unventured** (📞94837 47703; www.unventured.com) that will have you alternating between slim market lanes to broad avenues for a date with history, food, and culture. Along the way, you will get to chat with



A bird's-eye view from a microlight

in-the-know locals and have breakfast at 'secret' dosa joints that few other tourists will discover. Good backyard trails are also offered by **Pedal in Tandem** (📞97312 80808; www.facebook.com/pedalintandem) and **On a Pedal** (📞95138 86305; www.onapedal.com).

City walks

They might not be exactly 'adventurous', but city tours on

foot are a fantastic mind-opening experience where you can immerse yourself in local culture, history, and cuisine. All the following organisers come highly recommended; contact them in advance to find out what's on: **Unhurried** (📞98805 65446; www.unhurried.in), **Bangalore Walks** (www.bangalorewalks.com), **INTACH Parichay** (📞080 26794220; www.intachblr.org), **Bangalore By Foot** (www.bangalorebyfoot.com) and the food-focused **Oota Walks** (📞99161 29575; www.facebook.com/theootawalks).

📌 Top Tip: Solo cycling

If you don't want to sign up for a group cycling tour, you can hire a cycle from companies like **ICycle** (📞918861 102597) or **Rentomo** (📞85508 79001) and chalk out your own tour of the city. The Big Banyan Tree Loop is an interesting 50km ride that one can do with the help of Google Maps. The other option is to head to **Turahalli Forest** (p28) for plenty of greenery and exciting muddy trails.

♥ If You Like: Marathons

Bengaluru has a large running community and marathons are a mainstay of the city's calendar—there are over 30 running events in the year. **The Bengaluru 10K Challenge** (www.bengaluru10k.com) held in the middle of the year is one of the first and most prestigious events of the city.

Turahalli Forest (Tree Park)

A stretch of deciduous woods within the city, with walking, running, and cycling trails. Maintained by the Forest Department, it is a great place to spot birds, walk, or do rock climbing. There is a small temple, a natural lake, and a viewpoint from where you can see a vast expanse of treetops hemmed by buildings.

Bannerghatta Biological Park & Safari

Just 22km off Bengaluru, Bannerghatta offers a satisfying wildlife and nature experience. A vehicle safari allows for stunning sightings of tigers (white ones too), lions, bears, and various herbivores. There's also a zoo and butterfly park, making it a surefire hit for kids. Avoid weekends, which get very busy.

☎080 22352828; Bannerghatta Biological Park; entry adult/child ₹80/40, safari +zoo ₹260/130, butterfly park ₹30/20, camera/video ₹25/110; 9am–5pm, Grand safari 11am–4pm (Closed on Tues)

Motorsports

Bangaloreans love a good rally, and the city hosts a number of events that are suitable for amateurs as well as veterans. Highlights include the Heritage Drive, Time Trail, Lap

An off-road ATV ride in Bengaluru



♥ If You Like: Nature walks

The sprawling **Cubbon Park** (Kasturba Rd; 5am–8pm) and **Lal Bagh Botanical Gardens** (Mavalli; adults/children/parking cars ₹10/free/₹10; 6am–7pm) are the green lungs of Bengaluru, where walkers, joggers, and yoga lovers congregate in the mornings. Both parks offer great canopied paths, and house a number of endemic birds as well. **Bangalore Birding** (☎98451 49783; www.bangalorebirding.com) organises personalised tours and walks for enthusiasts.

Attack, Girls on Track, and Divas on Wheels—the calendar and admission details are updated on the website of the **Federation of Motor Sports Clubs of India** (www.fmsci.co.in). Go-karting is another popular pastime. Venues where you can burn some rubber include **TordO3** (☎90084 90303), **Raceway Motorsports** (☎99025 99021), and **Meco Kartopia** (☎99019 08789).

Dirt biking

While ATVs have been on the scene for a while, Bengaluru now boasts of a professional set-up by CS Santosh, an award-winning endurance motorcycle racer. At his facility, **Big Rock Dirtpark** (www.cssantosh.com/bigrockdirtpark), you can book slots to experience a range of terrains under his supervision. **Slideways Monarch** (☎98451 75898; www.slideways.mx) on Mysore Road offers a 650m track for professionals and new riders too. Do book ahead.

Eagles Unbound Adventure Park

You can sample a range of adventure activities at this popular adventure park, including rappelling, ATV riding, obstacle courses, and ziplining. It is often used for corporate outings so plan ahead if you want to avoid sharing the space with a large group. ☎95353 06707; www.eaglesunbound.com; Survey 23, KMS Farms Rd, Off Kanakapura Rd; cost depends on package

✓ Top Tip: Kid fitness

Get the kids to ditch screens at **Course Busters** (www.coursebusters.in; Cunningham Rd; weekdays 30mins/1hr ₹300/500, weekends ₹500/750). Inspired by the TV show *American Ninja Warrior*, the large space is dotted with specially created obstacles to challenge and push physical and mental abilities.

TOP CHOICE Must-visit city spots

Bangalore Palace Built in 1878, this ivy-clad palace looks rather like England's Windsor Castle with its Tudor-style turrets and towers. Inside, though, you will be transported to the world of Mysuru's royal family.

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

National Gallery of Modern Art Housed in the former vacation home of the Raja of Mysuru, this world-class art museum showcases an impressive permanent collection as well as changing exhibitions.

☎080 22342338; www.ngmaindia.gov.in; 49 Palace Rd, Vasanthanagar; adults/children/foreigners ₹10/1/150; 10am–5pm, closed on Mon & national holidays

Samsung Opera House The 1900s-built Opera House was given a fresh lease of life in 2018, and is now Samsung's largest experience store.

☎95138 99866; www.samsung.com; No. 57, Opera House; 11am–10pm

Tipu Sultan Palace Enter through a well-manicured garden to find yourself in the summer palace of Tipu Sultan (1781), which sits oasis-like amidst modern buildings.

☎080 26706836; Albert Victor Rd, Chamrajpet; Indian adults/foreigners/video ₹5/100/25; 8.30am–5.30pm

Dodda Basavana Gudi (Bull Temple) Built in 1537, this temple is dedicated to Nandi, whose 4.5m statue here is one of the largest in India. A large rocky outcrop, Bugle Rock, straddles the temple compound as you walk towards the right from the adjacent Ganesha Temple. Basavanagudi; 7.30am–8.30pm

The Nandi statue at Dodda Basavana Gudi



RAMANAGARA

Rock climbing

The main reason to visit Ramanagara is to learn climbing, or to test your skill on rocks at varying degrees of difficulty. **Ramadevara Betta** (747m) is the most popular hillock, and ideal for beginners; popular climbs on it include the Rainbow, Anna Thammasa, and Wanakkal Wall. There is a small temple dedicated to Lord Rama, Hanuman, and Sita perched on top of the hill. There are also plenty of other unmarked spots that can be navigated by seasoned climbers. One of the best guided day-long trips with instructors is offered by **Mars Adventures** (☎98866 64666; www.marsadventures.in; ₹1000 per head). The tour leaves at 6am from Bengaluru, stopping for a quick breakfast along the way. The next 4–5 hours are devoted to trying out various climbing techniques and learning with ropes and harnesses. After lunch, you get a chance to try out some hand-bouldering with minimum assistance.

Trekking

Adventure outfits such as **Adventure Nest** (☎78924 21158; www.adventurenest.com) offer packages that include trekking up Ramadevara Betta. Another good option in the vicinity is the Bidarakatte Trek, which is organised by **My Eco Trip** (www.myecotrip.com) through the Forest Department. This trek, led by an expert, is particularly rewarding



A rock climber at Ramanagara

for nature aficionados, who may be able to spot the rock agama (a type of iguanian lizard) and birds such as the sirkeer cuckoo and the endangered yellow-throated bulbul.

Top Tip: Climb safe

- Do not visit during rains as the rocks become very slippery. The best time to climb is October to March.
- Ramanagara has plenty of unmarked spots that can be navigated by seasoned climbers, but the trails are not always in tip-top shape so exercise caution. If you're going it solo, you will need permission from the **Range Forest Office** (☎94485 65452), but this can be taken care of if you're joining an adventure outfit.

✓ Top Tip: Bird-watching highlights



Both Ramanagara and Nandi Hills are rewarding destinations for birders. Ramanagara is home to species such as the yellow-throated bulbul and the endangered long-billed vulture, while at Nandi Hills you can hear the calls of tailorbirds, thrushes, babblers, Brahminy kites, and even the rare Egyptian vulture.

Bengaluru-Ramanagara-Bengaluru cycling loop

Art of Bicycle Trips (☎81299 45707; www.artofbicycletrips.com; ₹4900 per head, inclusive of gear, meals, guide and back-up van) offers an easy-paced countryside ride from Bengaluru to Ramanagara, stopping at the Big Banyan Tree that spreads over three acres. Once in Ramanagara, the group ditches the wheels and hikes up Ramadevara Betta before heading back.

NANDI HILLS

Nandidurg Fortress

Nandi Hills sits safe within the ramparts of the **Nandidurg**

Fortress, overlooking vast tracts of chequered farmland. It is an idyllic garden paradise, teeming with a variety of flowering shrubs, cooled by hilly breezes even in summer, and scattered with monuments and shrines in the most unexpected places. The former hill fortress built by Tipu Sultan as his summer retreat is a much-loved sunrise spot and half-day trip from Bengaluru. Spots that need extra attention on top of the hill are **Tipu's Summer Palace** and **Tipu's Drop**, an erstwhile execution spot that now offers panoramic views of the countryside below. At the base of Nandi Hills is the 9th-century Dravidian-style **Bhog**

📷 Snapshot: Filmy landscape

The granite hills of the town have appeared as a backdrop in a number of films, most notably, in the Bollywood hit, *Sholay*. The pale brown rockscape features as the den of the menacing dacoit Gabbar in the film. The rugged landscape has also appeared in David Lean's *A Passage to India*. For this film, the production team built faux cave entrances, and shallow doorways which still exist on the smooth face of the rock.

Nandeeshwara Temple, dedicated to Nandi. The village around the temple is occupied by a several potters, whose works often become the subjects of photography enthusiasts.

6am–6pm; entrance fee ₹10

Hiking

A 1.5km (time dependent on fitness levels) stepped trail from Sultanpet Village (Close to the Silver Oak Farm) leads right up to the hilltop. The canopied pathway is easy to navigate, except for a few steep patches in the middle. Every now and then the thick undergrowth clears and the view of the fields and village homes below becomes clear. The steps open up in the Nandi Hill complex, just after the entrance arch.

Cycling trips

Cycling enthusiasts are fond of the Nandi Hills circuit as it's easy to

access from Bengaluru but tough enough to test your muscles and willpower as you pedal your hairpin bends from base to top. Art of **Bicycle Trips** (☎81299 45707; www.artofbicycletrips.com) and **Unventured** (☎94837 47703; www.unventured.com) offer day-long trips.

Winery tours

The base of Nandi Hills is home to a number of wineries. A trip here makes for an indulgent weekend getaway with a bit of exercise and adventure thrown in. **Grover Wineries** (☎080-27622826; www.groverzampa.in;) and **Nandi Valley Winery** (☎93799 07300; www.nandivalleywinery.com) at the base of Nandi Hills offer close access to adventure and unwinding in the same getaway. Roam the winery, taste some vino, and learn about pairings from sommeliers.

Take a break with a wine tour at Nandi Hills



♥ If You Like: Adventure day trips from Bengaluru

Bengaluru's outskirts are the perfect outdoor playground for short hikes, climbing, kayaking, and camping.

Manchanabele Dam Located 37km southwest of the city off Mysore Road, the small water reservoir is ideal for kayaking. A day's getaway could include driving to the spot, pitching your tents, kayaking, and then spending the night surrounded by nature.

Savandurga One of the largest monolith hills in Asia, Savandurga (1226m) lies 50km from Bengaluru. The hill has two parts, Karigudda or the Black Hill, and Biligudda, or the White Hill. Climbers head here to practise their skills on the large flat outcrops.

Kabbala Durga Veer off the Mysore highway after Channapatna towards Kabbala Durga (80km from Bengaluru) for another climbing terrain. This is also a popular spot for night treks. Adventure outfits in Bengaluru (p12) offer a complete package of transportation, climbing with an expert and snacks.

Avalabetta Located 90km from Bengaluru towards Chikkaballapur, Avalabetta is best known for a precipitous hanging rock that offers breathtaking sunrise views. Most people prefer to set off early in the morning (think 3am) to allow for the two-hour drive and the uphill trek, which can take up to an hour.

Madhugiri The 1200m-high Madhugiri (Honey Hill) lies 100km north of the city, and houses an ancient fort and a weathered Gopalakrishna temple. It takes more than four hours to hike up the steep hillside.

Uttari Betta The serene hilltop shrine and the stunning views below draw sunrise trekkers to this pale brown hill. Only 30km from the city, Uttari Betta overlooks the Thottikallu Falls. Thick undergrowth hinders walking to the waterfall but there is a clear trail to follow if your destination is the peak.

Makali Durg About 60km north of Bengaluru, the 1350m-high Makali Durg skirts a forested region below. Trekking groups usually start at the railway track that runs at the base of the hill. A weathered fort from the Vijayanagara Empire days and the sprawling patchwork of forests, natural pools and fields below are the sweet rewards for legging up the distance.



A black buck at Madhugiri

Skandagiri Hills Formerly known as Kalwaribetta or Kalavara Durga, Skandagiri used to be mountain fortress. Located around 70km from Bengaluru, it is now a popular spot for hiking up during the night from the base of Kalavara village, just in time for the sunrise. This is best done with an adventure outfit. It takes 4–5 hours for a round trip at an easy pace. The Papagni Temple stands atop this hill.

Somanahalli An adventure basecamp run by **Mars Adventures** (📞98866 64666; www.marsclimbing.com) at the base of Ravugudlu Betta (34km) offers a chance to explore a bunch of activities (trekking, rappelling, a rope challenge, and camping) as part of the same trip. A basic site with camping and dormitory options is also equipped to make delicious meals.

Shivanasamudra Waterfalls A post-monsoon essential, these waterfalls are not only balm for the eyes but also allow for rides in a coracle—a round, basket-like boat. Located 139km from Bengaluru (a drive of about three hours), the falls plummet down a height of almost 100m and have a coverage of 305m across, making for a massive curtain of water.

Accommodation

BENGALURU


Taj West End

HERITAGE ₹₹₹

 080 66605660; www.tajhotels.com; 25, Race Course Rd, High Grounds; d from ₹13,999, incl breakfast Bathed in colonial-era elegance, Taj West End sits in one of the greenest pockets of the city and is centrally located for key sightseeing spots. The service is impeccable, the lawns are a sight for sore eyes, and the food is excellent in the restaurants Blue Ginger (Vietnamese) and Masala Klub (north Indian).

Grand Mercure

HOTEL ₹₹₹

 080 45121212; www.grandmercurebangalore.com; 12th Main, 3rd Block, Koramangala; d from ₹8550, incl breakfast Though black-and-white photos of Karnataka's heritage pride, Hampi, adorn the walls, the mood

Top Tip: Budget digs

A clutch of hostels in Indiranagar and Koramangala—both of which have an active nightlife and dining scene—cater to youngsters on a shoestring budget. Choose from **Zostel** ( 022 48962270; www.zostel.com), **Hibernest** ( 080 41126755; www.hibernest.com), the eco-conscious **Cuckoo Hostel & Commune** ( 72041 56880; www.cuckoohostels.com) and **Tribe Theory** (www.tribetheory.com) that pitches itself to austere entrepreneurs.

here is still contemporary and chic. A poolside cafe, gym, spa, a deli, wi-fi facilities, and cycles to hire make it a good option in Koramangala.

Kumarakrupa Hotel

HOTEL ₹₹₹

 080 22259404; www.kstdc.co; d (AC deluxe) ₹2250, incl breakfast This KSTDC run hotel is located in the heart of the city. The green, peaceful setting offers a relaxing ambience to unwind, as do the plush interiors of the well-equipped rooms. An in-house restaurant serving authentic Kannada food (try the thali), a gym and sprawling gardens complete the experience. The hotel is a stroll away from Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath, a lovely art complex.


The Lalit Ashok

HOTEL ₹₹₹

 080 30527777; www.thelalit.com; Kumara Krupa High Grounds; d from ₹5475, incl breakfast Overlooking the world's fifth oldest golf course, Bangalore Golf Club, Lalit Ashok's pleasingly green ambience are a world away from the busy roads. Amenities include access to the golf course and an award-winning spa, Rejuve.


The Chancery Pavilion

HOTEL ₹₹₹


 080 41414141; www.chanceryhotels.com; 135 Residency Rd; d from ₹4750 (flexi rates), incl breakfast Here you'll find all the comforts of a high-end hotel (including a swimming pool and multi-cuisine restaurants) at a reasonable price, and right at the centre of the city at that. They also offer attractive deals, including some at the last minute.

Farmstays

On The Rocks Ditch the city and escape to the single-room (an expansion is on the way) hilltop cottage only two hours from Bengaluru. Owned by seasoned biker Meghna Khanna, it is an ideal place to hammock away the afternoon. There is a lovely porch to watch the sun go down and an outdoor kitchen to whip up food (carry your own supplies). Food can also be arranged from a nearby restaurant. There's space to pitch tents too.

 098454 77456; www.instagram.com/ontherocks_farm_getaway; DK Farm Santhanapalli; d from ₹2500, excl food; camping ₹1000 per head

Graceland Farmstay Artist Nidhi Mariam Jacob's three-bedroom homestead exudes a faraway feel in the middle of a 5-acre farm, though it's just a two-hour drive from Bengaluru. It's a great place to unplug and get back to basics. Carry supplies to cook or let caretakers Paneer and Muthamma take over—their simple veg fare is quite wholesome and tasty. This is a haven for kids who'll love the three dogs (Karpa, Roadie, Drift) along with the menagerie of cats, chickens, ducks, cows, goats and even a visiting monkey. The small freshwater pool, cycling track, rock pond and ample nature trails are perfect panaceas for the vagabond soul.

 99019 17714; Denkanikottai; s with/without food ₹2200/1500

On the Rocks offers a chance to get down to earth





An airy room at Casa Cottage

Casa Cottage HOTEL ₹

📞 080 22990337; www.casacottage.com; 2, Clapham Rd, Richmond Town (Behind Richmond Town Post Office); d from ₹3375, incl breakfast A peaceful retreat in yellow, tucked away in the narrow green streets of centrally located Richmond Town, Casa Cottage's legacy of over 95 years is still intact in its vintage look, period furniture and soothing ambience. Choose the more spacious rooms on the 1st floor, which have a private sit-out.

RAMANAGARA

JüstaBoutique HOTEL ₹

📞 080 41135555; www.justahotels.com; No.21/14, Craig Park Layout, MG Rd; d from ₹3820, incl breakfast Right from the soothing art from Tagore's Shantiniketan in the lobby to the 18 tastefully decorated rooms, this three-star hotel provides worthy competition to its five-star neighbours. At a central yet secluded location, it offers a travel desk, pick up service (from the airport or station), and free wi-fi.

Jayamahar Hotel Heritage HOTEL ₹

📞 080 40580444; www.jayamaharpalace.in; # 1, Jayamahar Rd; d from ₹3795, incl breakfast This 19-acre property of the Raja of Gondal has received a new lease of life as a heritage hotel. Expect wooden floors beneath plush carpets, high ceilings and sprawling rooms. These heritage delights are offset by mod-cons such as a pool, wi-fi zone, bar and restaurants.

Hill View RESORT ₹

📞 97409 83701; www.hillviewresorts.in; d from ₹2800, incl breakfast The plush option in the vicinity of Ramanagara, Hill View is a restful haven after a hard day of rock climbing. The rooms are a bit basic but clean, the views are stunning and there's a pool and spa. An in-house restaurant dishes out tasty local cuisine.

NANDI HILLS

Mayara Pine Top (KSTDC) HOTEL ₹

📞 8618799918; Nandi Hills, Chikballapur, Kolar; d from ₹2499 This hotel offers fantastic views of the landscape and comfortable rooms, including a suite featuring a canopied bed. The on-site restaurant is a fine spot to enjoy the view along with a beer and some nibbles. Interestingly, Mahatma Gandhi stayed twice in the heritage building here (Gandhi Nilaya), in 1927 and in 1936.

Discovery Village RESORT ₹

📞 080 46809084; www.discoveryvillage.in; next to Kanive Nandishwara Temple, Nandi Foothills; d from ₹5000 per person, full board Located at the edge of Nandi Hills, 50km from the city, Discovery Village offers multiple wildlife and adventure activities, ranging from trekking and cycling to birdwatching and barbecues. It's ideal for family holidays and corporate retreats, and group deals are often more cost-effective.

Shathayu Ayurveda Yoga Retreat WELLNESS RESORT ₹

📞 88841 33300; www.shathayuretreat.com; S.No. 261, Avathi, Devanahalli; d from ₹18000 for a 2-day package, incl full board, yoga, meditation and 2 therapies A holistic wellness retreat located in Devanahalli on the outskirts of Bengaluru, Shathayu is a place with real soul. Reserve a few days for healing packages (tailor-made to focus on weight management, naturopathy, and de-stressing, amongst others). With satvik food,

yoga and customised wellness programmes, you're bound to feel revitalised after a stay.

Eating

BENGALURU

Fly Dining ADVENTURE EXPERIENCE ₹₹₹

📞 84484 44960; www.flydining.com; House of Life, Near Manyata Tech Park, Nagawara; ₹14,000 for two This unusual restaurant promises an 'adventure dining' experience (complete with an indemnity form!), and entails being lifted by a crane about 50m above ground level on an open platform. There, around a table that can seat at most 24 people, a chef whips up treats from a set menu as you feast your eyes on views of the city sprawl and greenery around. For the faint of heart, plenty of safety precautions are in place.

Experiencing the high life with Fly Dining



Book online and check the website to ensure you meet height/weight/health prerequisites.

Oota Bangalore REGIONAL ₹₹₹

☎88802 33322; Above Windmills Craftworks; 5B Rd EPIP Zone, Basavanna Nagar, Whitefield; mains above ₹1500; noon–3.30pm, 7–11.30pm An ode to the culinary heritage of Karnataka, Oota Bangalore has curated a spectacular menu of authentic cuisine from different parts of the state.

Salvadore's Fine Dining ANGLO-INDIAN ₹₹₹

☎080 4965 3492; www.salvadores.co.in; Central Mall, 5th Floor, MG Rd; mains above ₹2000; 11am–11pm (weekend breakfasts at 9am) Salvadore's is all about paying homage to the past with a contemporary twist—think nostalgic colonial-style delicacies such as dak bungalow chicken curry and comforting Irish stew.

Upma is a healthy breakfast staple

Forage EUROPEAN ₹₹₹

☎88840 02112; 318, 6th Main Rd, HAL 2nd Stage, Indiranagar; mains ₹750–1000; 12:30–3:30pm, 7:30–10:30pm Ideal for an afternoon salad or a touch of tapas, Forage has a relatively healthy menu that is aptly served up amid plenty of greenery.

Dindigul Thalappakatti BIRYANI ₹₹

☎080 4229 7250; www.thalappakatti.com; 100 Feet Rd, HAL 2nd Stage, Indiranagar; mains ₹500–750; noon–4pm, 6.30–11pm You get all sorts of south Indian fare here, but it is biryani that it's justifiably famous for. The authentic Dindigul version is a must-try.

Vaathsalya Millet Café VEG ₹₹

☎94490 64494; 15th Cross Rd, Outer Ring Rd, 277, 21st Main Rd, J P Nagar Phase 5; mains ₹500–750; 10am–noon, 4–8pm, closed Tue & Fri As the name suggests this place specialises in dishes made from millets, a healthy

✓ Top Tip: Pocket-friendly dining

Bengaluru is a haven for quick-service authentic south Indian fare, including at chain restaurants like Adigas, Sukh Sagar, Kamath, Shanthi Sagar, and New Shanthi Sagar (often collectively referred to as darshinis) with their 'stand and eat' sections with metallic tables where you can gulp down your vadas and filter kaapi. For budget non-veg cuisine, there are military hotels peppered across town serving robust biryanis and meat. If street food is your thing, then don't miss **Thindi Beedi** or Eat Street (Old Market Rd, VV Puram, 6.30–11.30pm), which stirs to life at dusk with people hollering for their chaat orders, juice, paper dosas, and a variety of sweets. Try local Kannadiga favourites like milk dipping chiroti (a layered syrup-soaked pastry).

gluten-free grain. Their millet thali is a wholesome option packed with healthy sprouts, millet rotis, salads, and more.

Nagarjuna ANDHRA ₹₹

☎080 4280 0900; www.nagarjunarestaurants.com; #195, Indiranagar Double Rd, Near HDFC Bank, Stage 2, Hoyalasa Nagar, Indiranagar; mains ₹500–750; noon–4pm, 7–11pm This place attracts loads of repeat customers for its scrumptious thali and biryani, with portions that will send you into a food coma.

Koshy's MULTICUISINE ₹₹

☎080 22213793; No. 39, St. Marks Rd; mains ₹500–750; 9am–11pm This old-timer has hosted illustrious guests such as Jawaharlal Nehru and Queen Elizabeth. Today, uniformed waiters flit around busily with steel trays containing favourites such as mutton cutlets, baked beans, pots of tea, and caramel custard.

Mavalli Tiffin Rooms SOUTH INDIAN ₹

☎080 2222 0022; www.mavallitiffinrooms.com; #14, Lal Bagh Main Rd, Doddamavalli, Sudhama Nagar; mains less than ₹200; 6.30–11am, 12.30–9.30pm, Mon closed A legendary name

✓ If You Like: Tippling

There is truth in Bengaluru's reputation of being a 'beer' city thanks to pubs like **Arbor Brewing Company** (www.arborbrewing.com; 8 Magrath Rd) and **Toit Brewpub** (www.toit.in; 298 100 Feet Rd, Indiranagar). There is always room for new favourites like **Bob's Bar** (☎78990 25176; 777/1, 100 Feet Rd, HAL 2nd Stage, Doopannahalli, Indiranagar) and back-to-basics classics like **Noon Wines** (☎Vasavi Complex, No 17/21, St Marks Rd), which opens from noon to 5pm only.



📍 If You Like: Home-style dining

Bangalore Oota Company Pre-book three- or five-course meals, customised to your taste but steeped in Gowda and Mangalorean roots. Not only do you get to deep dive into the fantastic regional flavours but it feels like home, what with the owners themselves hosting you. The bright yellow interiors and red door is enticing enough, but wait till you taste the mamsa saaru (a traditional mutton curry), bassaru (greens and lentil curry), and delicious ammani jamuns for dessert.

📍94483 02628; www.bangaluruootacompany.com; No. 5, Cambridge Cross Rd, Cambridge Layout; ₹2000 and above for two; noon–3.30pm, 7–11pm

The Restaurant—Coorg A 'weekend only' special of homemade Coorgi food prepared using traditional techniques and fresher than fresh spices by Priya and KC Aiyappa. The rooftop buffet lunch gets booked fast.

📍09845493688; 477 Krishna Temple Rd, 1st Stage, Indiranagar; mains ₹500–750; Fri 8–11pm, Sat–Sun noon–3.30pm & 8–11pm

in south Indian comfort food, this super-popular eatery (particularly the Lal Bagh branch) has had Bengaluru eating out of its hands since 1924. Head to the dining room upstairs, queue for a table, and tuck into delicious idlis and dosas, capped by frothing filter coffee served in silverware.

Airlines BREAKFAST ₹

📍080 22273783; No.4 Madras Bank Rd, Off Lavelle Rd; mains less than ₹200; 7am–10pm Early morning joggers, students bunking college, and other breakfast-seekers congregate under the shade of two large banyan trees for delicious 'tiffin' items such as shivage bhath, idlis and dosas, all to be washed down with brilliant coffee. There is a drive-through service here as well.

Brahmin's Café SOUTH INDIAN ₹

No. 3, Ranga Rao Rd, Shankarapuram; mains below ₹200; 6am–noon, 3pm–7pm, Sun closed The popularity of this small no-frills café hinges on its spartan menu of six items since 1945: idli, vada, khara bhath, kesari bhath, coffee, and *badam* milk. Yet, it commands a short stopover if you happen to be in old Bangalore.

Halli ManeSouth INDIAN ₹

📍080 65611222; www.hallimane.com; 3rd Cross, Sampige Rd, Malleshwaram; mains ₹250–500; noon–3.30pm & 7pm–11.30pm The mud-plastered walls, hand-painted traditional designs, Carnatic music, and traditionally dressed waiters are in sync with the typical South Indian rural fare (think ragi mudde, kundapura pathrode and akki rotti) that is served here. A ₹150 coupon gets you an elaborate

lunch which cannot be shared; else you can eat at the ground floor self-service section.

RAMANAGARA

Kamat SOUTH INDIAN ₹

📍90085 55933; Janapada Loka, Near Archakarahalli; mains ₹250–500; 6am–11.30pm This is an excellent stop for authentic south Indian snacks and meals. The busy highway outlet is a pitstop for many on the Mysuru highway so expect to wait for a table.

Kadambam Veg SOUTH INDIAN ₹

📍99453 90120; Sankala Geri Gate, Bangalore Mysore Highway, Channapatna; mains ₹250–500; 7am–8pm Kadambam stands as a beacon on this road, thanks to a bright Channapatna toy shop on its

Murukku is a popular teatime savoury snack

✅ Top Tip: Hill dining

Nandi Hills is not exactly a dining hotspot, but you can more than get by. While you get south Indian fare at Mayura PineTop (p39) and can book ahead for delicious home-cooked meals at Silver Oak Farm (📍98456 52267; www.silveroakfarm.com), most people are satisfied with a drop-in at the small snack outlet at the peak of Nandi Hills. The stall has perfected its Maggi and tea—the inevitable demands of trekkers, cyclists, and car loads of visitors.

premises. Foodies make sure they stop here for the large flat thatte idli and spicy tamarind rice.



Detour: Bheemeshwari & Galibore Nature Camps



Kayaking along a gentle stretch of the Kaveri River

A comfortable drive of 100km from Bengaluru, adventure-packed Bheemeshwari and Galibore Nature Camps (14km) allow you to immerse yourself in the serenity of nature beside the majestic Kaveri River. Look out for birds along nature trails, go mountain biking, drift along the waters on coracles, or just enjoy tranquil views of the wilderness and river. Bheemeshwari Adventure Camp also offers a fun day-long **Jungle Camps and Trails Plan** (10am–5.30pm, ₹2950 per person, meals included) for adrenaline junkies that includes rope and water-based activities such as the 'Burma loop' and 'parallel walk', rappelling, coracle ride and, if the water level is suitable, pool kayaking. Keep in mind that the

mercury can rise to pretty high levels between March and June.

Trekking Bheemeshwari has treks of varying duration, categorised as easy, moderate and tough, depending on the distance. There are also plenty of walks around Galibore.

Coracles & kayaking Instructor-led kayaking and coracle rides are possible in the calmer parts of the water. Single and double kayaks are available. All year round except June–September

Birds & wildlife This area is home to over 200 species of birds, including the commonly sighted

grey-headed fish eagle, tawny eagle, and the pied-crested cuckoo. Also look out for sambar, spotted deer, jackals and elephants, as well as the grizzled giant squirrel.

Mountain biking Mountain bikes are available to hire and explore the nearby forest topography. One is allowed only in the accepted tourist limit inside the forest.


Accommodation & Eating

Accommodation and eating at Bheemeshwari and Galibore are courtesy the eco-tourism-focused Jungle Lodges and Resorts Ltd (www.junglelodges.com).

Galibore Nature Camp CAMP ₹₹₹

 080 29784504; Uyamballi Post, Kanakapura Taluk, Sangam; executive tented cottages from ₹4345 per head, incl full board There are 12 thatched-roofed tented cottages, furnished comfortably with a double bed, clothes rack, table fan and a dresser. The bathrooms are attached to the tent but with a separate entrance. If you have a choice, pick tent No. 1 or 12 for maximum privacy. Fixed-menu veg and non-veg meals are served in the common gazebo at designated timings.

Bheemeshwari Nature & Adventure Camp CAMP ₹₹₹

 94495 97885; Bheemeshwari, Byadarahalli Post Halgur Hobli, Malavalli Taluk, Mandya; tented cottage/bamboo hut/cottage/log hut from ₹5079/6614/6117/4476 per person, incl full board Equipped with eight log huts, two cottages, eight tented cottages, and a bamboo tree cottage that blend with the wooded environs, this camp

is the perfect spot to connect with nature and enjoy river views. Buffet meals are served in an open gazebo, and tea makes an appearance at pre-decided times at the crack of dawn and in the evening. Do keep a watchful eye out for errant simians.

A grizzled giant squirrel, a threatened species





CHIKKAMAGALURU

Why Go?

Known for its coffee emerald plantations, rolling hills, and cool climes, scenic Chikkamagaluru is where a 17th-century saint is said to have brought the first coffee beans to India. Here you can ascend Karnataka's highest peak, Mullayanagiri, raft along the Bhadra River, and test your endurance on the famous Kudremukh trek.

Quick Facts

GETTING AROUND

Car: Chikkamagaluru is about 245km from Bengaluru and is one of the most travelled routes on NH75 on weekends. It takes about five hours with stops to reach the town.

Bus: A host of private and KSRTC buses run between Bengaluru and Chikkamagaluru at regular intervals. Opt for an overnight bus to optimise time.

GREAT FOR



TOP PICKS

- **Big Mountain Loop (p48):** Cover some of the most famous hilly spots in Chikkamagaluru.
- **Kudremukh trek (p48):** Climbing the state's third-highest peak is all about sweat and sinew.
- **Nature walks in coffee plantations (p51):** A must for birding enthusiasts.
- **Rafting on the Bhadra River (p51):** Thrills guaranteed.
- **River Tern Lodge (p53):** Watersports, birding, hikes, and a visit to an elephant camp.

The Kudremukh trek is one of the most rewarding climbs in Karnataka

Activities & sights

The Big Mountain Loop & Mullayanagiri trek

The mountain loop covers some of the most interesting spots in Chikkamagaluru. Go past city traffic towards **Kaimara** and start in the foothills, heading straight to **Sheethalagiri**, a 1000-year-old Mallikarjuna temple. Duck below the low door here to receive some *prasadam*, a fistful of water from a natural pool. Next on the 'loop' is the mist-covered **Baba Budangiri Hill** (or Dattagiri Hill Range). Here, a small shrine—visited by Hindus and Muslims alike—perched at 1895m offers wonderful views of the valley below. The final stop is **Mullayanagiri**, Karnataka's highest peak (1930m), which affords another great view (it can get windy and cold, so carry a jacket). If you're lucky, you may see kurinji flowers, which bloom in periods of 12 years. An adventurous way of experiencing the highest peak in Karnataka is on

foot. Sign up with **India Hikes** for a trek from basecamp of Sarpadari, wending your way through the misty trail. It takes about three hours to cover the 4km distance. September to February are best for this.

☎080 46801269; indiahikes.com; cost based on number of people

Kudremukh trek

Trekking to the horse-faced mountain (the literal translation of 'kudremukh') is fun but challenging. The trail is a strenuous one with several stream crossings and steep patches that are definitely not for the physically unfit. The landscape here is a study in contrasts, taking in both lush Shola forests teeming with wildlife and sun-baked grasslands—and that's before you even reach the summit; one can spot deer, wild boar, sambar, and Indian gaur (bison). The trek is about 9.5km long (one way) and takes 8–9 hours to complete. Kudremukh has one main route, which is supported by local guides and a reliable travel



Snapshot: Cafe Coffee Day

It is inevitable that you will find the familiar red signage of the Karnataka-born coffee shop brand wherever you go in the state. Cafe Coffee Day Global Limited Company was founded in Chikkamagaluru, and still grows coffee in its own estates spanning 20,000 acres.

The company is the largest producer of arabica beans in Asia exporting to various countries, including the USA, Europe, and Japan.

Top Tip: Get oriented

- **Pick a base** Chikkamagaluru is a large region, so it's best to divide your trip into parts, depending on the experience you are looking for. Choose between the big mountain loop of Mullayanagiri, Baba Budangiri and Kemmanagundi, or the section that comprises Kudremukh, Horanadu and the Bhadra River. Be ready to do a lot of exploring on foot as the region demands walking through coffee estates and covering easy hiking trails.
- **Forest entry** Bhadra Wildlife Sanctuary consists of four parts: The Muthodi Forest Reserve, Tarikere, Lakkavalli and Hebbe. Entry to the forest is only allowed from the Lakkavalli side via safaris organised by Jungle Lodges and Resorts Ltd (River Tern Lodge). One cannot enter this forest from Chikkamagaluru town.
- **Timing** The best time for treks is between September and February.

infrastructure of homestays and a few hotels. Trekking during the monsoons should be avoided. For more details on the trek, see p50

Ballalarayana Durga trek

The 12th-century Ballalarayana fort, built by the Hoysala king Veera Balala I, is situated on the

A herd of Indian gaur on the Kudremukh trail

high reaches of Bettabalige in Chikkamagaluru (459m). While little remains of the Dravida-style structure, it offers breathtaking views of the rolling hills below and makes for a great trek (2 hours) for nature enthusiasts. If you add **Bandajje Arabi Falls** along with this hike, it can take up to 4–6 hours from Gowdara Mane. www.indiahikes.com



✓ Top Tip: Cracking Kudremukh

Permissions The trekking trail lies inside the Kudremukh National Park; you need permission from the **Office of the Range Forest Officer** ☎94808 07653, 10.30am–5.30pm; Trek/forest entry/guide ₹75/200/500.

What to Pack Water, sunscreen, cap, wind-cheater, snacks, trekking shoes, salt sachets (to get rid of leeches), and mosquito repellent.

Accommodation Camping is not allowed, so do book a night at a homestay such as Thangaali (p52).

Guides Though the track is well marked, it is advisable to hire a guide (most communicate only in Kannada and Hindi but are very helpful). Organised trips and homestay accommodations can also be arranged by operators such as India Hikes (see Mullayanagiri trek, p48).

Hebbe Falls

The otherwise unremarkable hill station of Kemmanagundi provides an access point to the picturesque Hebbe Falls. Getting here involves an adventurous off-road journey of 13km which can only be covered in

A rafting trip down the Bhadra River

a four-wheel vehicle. Rickety jeeps are available on hire (₹300 per person in a shared vehicle) for a round trip. The falls are reached after a short walk. There are a couple of points where you'll need to hop across a shallow but rocky stream (take off your shoes and wade across the stream). The effort, however, is absolutely



worth it as you wash the 168m drop from below the gushing water. Entry/parking ₹50/₹10; 8am–4pm

Rafting

Besides providing a soothing backdrop to parts of this region, the Bhadra River also provides rafting opportunities. The 3–4km circuit covering three rapids takes about an hour. **Ace Paddlers** offer all-inclusive packages.

☎94809 87672; www.acepaddlers.com; near Nadar Pump house, Kalasa Balehonur Rd, Balehole; ₹1200 per person; all year round

Coffee Yatra

This is an excellent museum display on the origin of coffee and its evolution in the country. There is a laboratory where you can see how coffee is processed, but no tastings. Coffee Centre, Behind ZP Office, Kadur Rd; ₹20; 10am–1pm & 2–5.30pm, closed on Sat, Sun & general holidays

Nature trails

Most coffee estates boast a variety of foliage and walking trails. They also attract birds such as the scarlet minivet, flameback woodpecker, bee eater, egret, and many more.

♥ If You Like: Temples

Horanadu This pilgrimage centre is famous for the deity of Annapurneshwari—a goddess who feeds one and all—which was installed by Adi Shankaracharya. Do not miss out on the simple but tasty prasadam of Malnad-style food (lunch noon–2.30pm, dinner 8–9.45pm).

Belavadi A 29km drive from Chikkamagaluru, this 13th-century Hoysal-era temple is best known for its 100 soapstone pillars and three shrines dedicated to Lord Vishnu.

Belur & Halebidu The Hoysala temple circuit is a short detour (less than 45 minutes by car) from Chikkamagaluru. The two most famous temples, Belur and Halebidu, represent a high point in ancient Hindu architecture, with their intricate carvings.

Amruteshwara Temple This 12th-century temple is built in typical Hoysala style with a wide hall and intricate carvings that depict stories of the great epics. It is located in the village of Amruthapura, 67km north of Chikkamagaluru town.

Kalabhairaveshwara Temple About 30km from Chikkamagaluru in a lush copse in the village of Devaramane, this ancient two-tiered shrine holds great importance for the local community.



Accommodation

Trivik RESORT ₹₹₹

☎9880552711, 9148971583; www.trivikhotels.com, Channagondanahalli, Elunoorhkan Rd, Mullayanagiri; full board from ₹24,000 Located amid 38 acres of coffee plantations near Mullayanagiri, this luxurious resort features massive suites with Jacuzzis, gorgeous views of the hills, and a good mix of local cuisine and other fare.

The Serai RESORT ₹₹₹

☎8262 224903; www.theserai.in; K.M Rd, Mugthihalli Post, Chikkamagaluru; r incl full board from ₹19,000 There's every luxury here, with each of the 29 villas boasting a Jacuzzi or pool. They arrange plantation visits, where you can learn about coffee making.

Flameback Lodge RESORT ₹₹₹

☎82632 15170; www.flameback.in; Near Devalankere, Sakleshpur; d incl full board from ₹12,000 Private villas, suites and cottages with wide sunning decks, personal Jacuzzis, and a pool are a pleasant surprise at this eight-room boutique resort, which affords views of a lake, waterfall and paddy fields.

Java Rain VILLAS ₹₹₹

☎090086 66000; www.javarainresorts.com; Girija Estates, Survey no – 618; d from ₹11,000, incl breakfast, excl taxes These 18 luxury villas occupying an entire hillside afford plenty of privacy and stunning views, especially from the terrace deck amidst clouds. The in-house dining, a spa, and nature trails are other perks of staying here.

Balur Estate HOMESTAY ₹₹₹

☎95900 50001; www.linger-at-balur.in; Balur Estate, Chikkamagaluru; 2 room ste houses 4, ₹8825 full board and activities Set up base in a refurbished 1800s planter's cottage amid 400 acres of coffee plantations.

Taj Gateway HERITAGE ₹₹₹

☎1800111825; www.tajhotels.com; Jyoti Nagar Post; d from ₹8500, incl breakfast Nested on the lush Sahyadri slopes, this hotel offers plush rooms, indoor and outdoor games, a swimming pool, and great in-house dining. Those wanting to combine the Taj experience with plantation living could stay at **Arabidacool Bungalow**, an **Ama Plantation Trails** property (www.amaplantationtrails.com; from ₹8,950 incl breakfast).

Hunkal Woods HOMESTAY ₹₹₹

☎98860 00788; www.hunkalwoods.in; Thogarihunkal Group Estates, Chikkamagaluru; d from ₹5600, incl full board Perfect for family getaways and adventure groups alike, with its combination of comfort and location for treks. They offer some interesting trails, including a sambar deer track.

Bhagawathi Nature Camp RESORT ₹₹

☎944959 9769; www.junglelodges.com; Bhagawathi Nature Camp, Kudremukha Mudigere Taluk; d from ₹1977 per person for the tented cottage, full board In a prime location inside Kudremukha National Park, this camp has first row seats to local wildlife and views of misty hills, including the

Kudremukh peak. Immerse yourself in nature-based activities during the day and then settle under the stars in the evening to swap stories with other travellers.

Kemmanagundi Lodges GUEST HOUSES ₹₹

☎94491 38072; www.horticulture.kar.nic.in; d ₹1680, incl breakfast Government-run guest houses at Kemmanagundi hill station offer clean, comfy

rooms. Options include Dattatri Bhavan, Vana Darshinki, Narayana Kuteera. Budan Giri Lodge, and Virupaksha Lodge.

Mayura Velapuri (Belur) HOTEL ₹₹

☎89706 50026; www.kstdc.co; Temple Rd; d from ₹1500 Clean, spacious and walking distance from the Chennakesava Temple, Mayura is a top choice for many travellers for its convenient location and amenities.

Detour: River Tern Lodge

On the edge of Bhadra Dam backwaters, and just 4km from Bhadra Tiger Reserve, the River Tern Lodge offers an enticing package of adventure, nature, and plush living. During the river tern breeding season in summer, thousands of these orange-beaked birds congregate on semi-submerged islands in the river. There are many activities on offer, including kayaking lessons, jeep and boat safaris, and guided nature walks. You can even rent mountain bikes and hit the trails. A few kilometres from the lodge, the **Sakrebailu Elephant Camp** (8.30–11am) allows you to see elephants being fed and bathed on the banks of the River Tunga. Evenings at the lodge are best reserved for relaxing near the bonfire area, and dining at the pavilion. ☎08261 215 425; www.junglelodges.com; Behind Ranganathaswamy Temple, Bhadra Project, Lakkavalli; d from ₹6720 per person, incl full board and activities

A nature trail near the River Tern Lodge





KODAGU (COORG)

Why Go?

On the eastern edge of the Western Ghats, the Kodagu region has a diverse topography, with mountains, coffee plantations, thick forests, paddy fields and rivers. Amid these travellers can experience rafting, kayaking, canoeing, and trekking, and find out for themselves why Kodagu is called the 'adventure capital' of Karnataka.

Quick Facts

GETTING THERE & AROUND

Air: The closest airports to Kodagu are Mysuru (132km) and Kannur in Kerala (91km). Both airports are served by domestic airlines.

Bus: KSRTC buses from Bengaluru head mostly till Madikeri. A few run up to Kushalnagar, or other points closest to Kakkabe (Baghamandala, Virajpet). For Kutta, it is best to drive down.

Cab: The most convenient option. Distances in Kodagu are long so plan ahead to optimise time. Rent a cab for approx ₹10 per km, min 250–300 km per day and driver allowance of ₹250–300 per day.

GREAT FOR



TOP PICKS

- **Brahmagiri trek (57):** A walk in the wilds.
- **Rafting in the Barapole River (p56):** Chills and thrills.
- **Dubare Elephant Camp (p61):** Kids will love this one.
- **Harangi Dam backwaters (p60):** Camping under the stars.
- **Kodava cuisine (p66):** Try the famous *pandi* (pork) curry.

Panoramic views from Tadiandamol

Activities/sights

OFF KUTTA

Rafting

Get soaked in the gushing waters of the Upper Barapole (Kithu-Kakkatu River) and manoeuvre 1–4 class rapids. The base camp in Glenlorna tea estate, suitable to cover the middle section of the river, is well-organised, with hot showers and a bonfire place. Before starting your rafting trip, you'll be briefed and given a training session. Non-swimmers can also enjoy the 2.8km stretch where you bounce across rapids like Morning Coffee (level 1), Grasshopper (level 2), Ramba Samba (level 2), Wicked Witch (level 3) and the Big Band (level 4): a safety kayak always follows the rafts. Afterwards, get driven back to the camp in a jeep to share the excitement over a hot cup of tea and snacks. Weight and

age limits are 120kg and children above 14 years only.

☎094809 87672; www.acepaddlers.com; No.619, 1st Floor, 10th A Cross, behind Modi Hospital, Mahalakshimpuram, Bengaluru; cost ₹1000 per head; June–Oct

Brahmagiri Trek

The wavy ridge of the Brahmagiri range is easily seen running through the most part of Kodagu, covering at least 181km. Besides testing climbing ability and physical fitness in general, these mountains give trekkers an opportunity to explore the area's rich biodiversity (it's a hotspot for snakes and other wildlife). The trail passes through rich deciduous forests, shola copses and grasslands. On your way, you may even spot macaques, the Indian gaur, wild dogs, elephants, boars, and, if you're lucky, a tiger. The forest is also home to the longest venomous snake—the king cobra.

The trail starts from **Iruppu Falls**, which is often mistaken by locals to be **Talakaveri** (the source of the Kaveri River). The highest trekking point is 1608m and borders the Kerala and Karnataka border. A day-long trek takes about nine hours. Usually, trekkers like to stay overnight at the **Narimale Guest House**, which can be reached after three hours (5km). Day trekkers take a lunch break here and head along for another 4km to climb the peak, which affords sweeping views of small settlements, deep valleys, and cloud-covered lower ranges. The Brahmagiri peak is windy and cold so do take a warm jacket. Apply a week to 15 days in advance for permission at the **Range Forest Office** (☎08274 246331; 10.30am–5.30pm) in Srimangala. It's best to leave this to the homestays



Brahmagiri is a hotspot for snakes

so that when you arrive, you can go directly for the trek. You must be accompanied by a forest guard for the entire stretch. Forest entry ₹200 (per head), trekking ₹75 (per head), guide ₹500 (group)

♥ If You Like: A day of adventure

If you want to pack in a ton of adventure without undergoing the rigours of a full-blown trek or rafting expedition, consider signing up for a package of diverse activities offered by **Thrillophilia** (www.thrillophilia.com; ₹950 for 7 activities per adult). The menu of activities on offer include ziplining, quad biking, human gyro, and wall climbing, among others—it's more than enough to fill a day with adrenaline-pumping action in Kodagu. A team of instructors and experts will be available to help you with technique and gear.



✔ Top Tip: Get oriented

Spread over 4100 sq km, the whole of Kodagu is impossible to cover in a short duration. Base yourself at any one of the regional hubs listed below for your choice of activity:

Kutta Serves well as base camp, especially if you want to climb the Brahmagiri Peak or tumble down the white waters of the Upper Barapole River in a raft. It is also closest to Bengaluru, if you are taking the Nagarhole route (recommended as the roads are much better and the drive more scenic).

Kakkabe Tadiandamol, the highest peak in Kodagu, is just next door. You can also kayak or canoe on the Kakkabe River.

Kushalnagar A good base coming to Kodagu via Bylakuppe. Pitch tents by the Harangi Dam and go kayaking in the still waters of the reservoir. You can also climb the Kotte Betta (the third-highest peak in Kodagu).

Madikeri Most central to all the regions and the district headquarters. Has many sightseeing options and many places to stay and eat.

♥ If You Like: Waterfalls & treks



Scenic Iruppu Falls is the starting point for the Brahmagiri trek

Iruppu Falls, Kutta This picturesque waterfall (also known as the Lakshmana Tirtha Falls) is the starting point of the Brahmagiri trek. The water here flows down a stepped height of 52m, providing a feast for the eyes and music to the ears.

Malalli Falls, Somwarpet taluk Located close to Kushalnagar (38km), bucolic Somwarpet is coming into its own as a travel destination. Don't miss the 61m Mallalli Falls, which lies at the base of the verdant Pushpagiri Hills. There are several walking trails here, although you can drive up too. Monsoons are the best time to visit. Also well worth a visit in Somwarpet is the village of **Mullur**, which is home to three ancient Jain shrines (known as

"basadi") featuring 10th-century carvings and inscriptions.

Kotte Betta, Hattihole The third-highest peak in Kodagu, Kotte Betta (1645m) is a popular hiking destination, and is suitable for beginners too. Expect to see coffee plantations, forests, and many a gurgling stream. It is just 15km from Madikeri and 33km from Somwarpet.

OFF KAKKABE

Kayaking & Canoeing

Enjoy the more tranquil avatar of the Kaveri River with **Jungle Mount Adventures** at their 7-acre camp site, flanked by paddy fields and the flowing waters. The 6m-deep stretch of the river at the edge of the camp is perfect to enjoy the three-person kayaks and two-person canoes with instructors. The facility offers stay in basic camp rooms, food, gear and

a bonfire at the end of the day. Only checked in guests are allowed.

☎ 09845831675; www.junglemountadventures.com; Kakkabe Village, Yavakapady Post; d incl full board ₹3800, incl breakfast and kayaking

Tadiandamol Trek

The third highest peak (1748m) of Karnataka overlooks deep valleys of shola forests and misty mountain ranges below. The trail is frequented by experienced trekkers, and the

challenge level ranges from moderate to difficult.

Tadiandamol is best approached by **Kakkabe**. From Kakkabe, head 1km to **Kaikamba village**, from where a tarred road leads up to the base camp, **Nalknad Palace** (2km, p60). You can start the trek from here or hire a jeep which can drop you right till the end of the tarred road (3km). From this point Tadiandamol is 5km. The trek starts with a reasonably steep path at the edge of a coffee plantation which opens up into a shady forest patch and then the sunny grassland area. You soon hit a big rock, known as **Anegundi**, from where you can see the peak clearly. Note that there are two mountains in your view; one to the right and Tadiandamol on the left. The way to Tadiandamol is marked by a clear path, which gets steeper as you go up. Stop at the ridge between the two

Good outdoor gear is a must if you plan to rough it out

mountains and then head left towards the summit. Many trekkers climb Tadiandamol in about two hours and then attempt an ascent of the peak on the right. This is unadvisable, as the latter has no clear path.

The trip can be completed without any instructors or guides, but if you want help along the way, you can get in touch with **India Hikes** (www.indiahikes.com). It is best to leave at about 6am, to make the best of the early morning weather and come back to base before lunch. The best season is December to May. Camping is not allowed.

OFF KUSHALNAGAR

Camping, Harangi Dam Backwaters

Campers can wake up to a misty stretch of water and the sounds of the jungle at the backwaters of the Harangi Dam, just off Kushalnagar. An extension of Som and Chethana's homestay, Eco Habitat (14km from



Snapshot: Nalknad Palace

The weathered two storey Nalknad Palace (8.30am–7pm) is a key landmark for the Tadiandamol trek, and was built in 1792 by King Dodda Veerarajendra as a hideaway. Take some time to saunter inside and see the beautiful paintings (restored by the state's archaeology department) on the ceilings and walls. Mr Anand is the designated guard here and he enthusiastically shows you around the wooden-floored palace. Admire the red pillars, a wedding mandapa (hall) and the queen's quarters.


this spot, p67), the 3-acre personal camping spot is much-loved by outdoor enthusiasts. A coffee estate, bamboo stands, and the tranquil water skirt the property. Few places in Kodagu allow camping and this one definitely tops the list.

There is a small utility area with a basic loo close to the camping spot (usually preferred by families). Packed food, a barbecue, wood for a bonfire, and a watchman can be made available for an additional

A pachyderm enjoys a scrub at Dubare Elephant Camp



cost. Carry your own sleeping bag. You can also canoe and kayak here under Som's supervision.

 94481 27245; www.ecohabitat.in; refundable deposit of ₹2500; group of 4 ₹1500; kayaking/canoeing ₹250 per head (max 200kg, children above 5); prior permission needed before pitching a tent as this is a personal property

Dubare Elephant Camp

This unique facility, managed by **Jungle Lodges and Resorts**




Buddha statues at the Golden Temple in Bylakuppe near Kushalnagar

(JLR) and the Karnataka Forest Department, is located at the edge of the Kaveri River and the Dubare Reserve Forest. Here, trained naturalists help you observe, learn, and participate in numerous elephant-centric activities. A short boat ride takes you across to the camp, where you can participate in bathing and grooming the pachyderms. It is bound to be a hit with kids, although weekends often see long queues.

With a day-long package with JLR you can also grab a coracle ride on the river, a guided walk through the forest, and lunch plus coffee. You can add another adventure, also organised by JLR, by rafting off **Nisargadhama**, a verdant river island accessible by a rope bridge.

Snapshot: A glimpse of Tibet

Bylakuppe, 11km from Kushalnagar, is the second-largest Tibetan settlement in India (after Dharamshala) and a fascinating cultural addition to the trip, with its stupas, prayer flags and monasteries. The area's highlight is the atmospheric **Namdroling Monastery** (www.namdroling.org; 7am–6pm), home to the spectacular **Golden Temple** (7am–6pm), presided over by three 18m-high gold-plated Buddha statues. The temple is at its dramatic best when prayers are in session and it rings out with gongs, drums and the drone of hundreds of young monks chanting. The similarly ornate **Zangdogpalri Temple** (7am–6pm) is next door.

 080 40554055; www.junglelodges.com; Dubare Elephant Camp; 8am–3pm; elephant activities/day trip/accommodation ₹885/₹1499/starting ₹4267; entry fee Nisargadhama adults/kids ₹10/5; 9am–5pm

OFF MADIKERI

Hike to Manangeri

This trail is not quite on the tourist map but is one of the most beautiful ones in Kodagu.

Drive on the Madikeri–Mangaluru road, 10km off the toll junction to touch a small village called



Abbi Falls and its sylvan surrounds

Manangeri. Enjoy an exhilarating four-wheel drive for about 5km up the hill on the right, just by a small tea shop and then hike up to the Manangeri ridge. The hike is only about 2km, and doable for older children as well. Traversing the ridge is like walking among the clouds and the views are breathtaking. The easiest way to get here is to hire a jeep from Madikeri (₹1000 one way),

and ask the driver to wait to ferry you back once you're done.

Abbi Falls

An 8km drive beyond Madikeri through cardamom and coffee plantations will bring you a little short of the falls. A brief walk down a paved path from here takes you to a hanging bridge opposite the wide cascade of water. To minimise jostling with throngs of visitors, arrive in the mornings and afternoons. Swimming is dangerous and best avoided, and the place is infested by leeches during monsoon.

Mandalpatti

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

Snapshot: Talakaveri

Located 50km from Madikeri on the Brahmagiri Hill near Bhagamandala, Talakaveri is the origin of the Kaveri, southern India's most sacred river. While there is no visible source of water, a perennial spring is said to swell the water in the holy tank at the temple here, before emerging as the river some distance away. Come mid-October, on the day of Tulasankramana, thousands of pilgrims converge to witness the gush of water from the spring. Talakaveri is a longish, yet feasible day-trip from Madikeri. Combine your visit with a walk or drive up to the Brahmagiri peak, 8km away.

♥ If You Like: Temples & monuments

Madikeri Fort There are good views from this hilltop fort, built by Tipu Sultan in the 16th century. Within the fort's walls are the hexagonal palace (now the district commissioner's office) and a colonial-era church, which houses a small quirky museum.

10am–5.30pm; Sun–Fri

Omkareshwar Temple King Lingarajendra II commissioned this Shiva temple to be built in 1820 and it has remained one of the most revered sights of Madikeri. There is sprawling temple pond in front of the main shrine.

Raja's Seat A well-maintained garden in Madikeri once used by the Kodava rulers, it offers stunning views of the valley below. Visit in the evening to see the sun descend behind rolling hills; after sunset, the musical fountains are switched on.

MG Rd; ₹5; 5.30am–7pm

Raja's Tomb Also called Gadduge, these mausoleums of the Kodava rulers are located just short of the Abbi Falls. Built in the Indo-Saracenic style, the domes and minarets tower over the town of Madikeri.

Igguthappa Temple Dedicated to the main deity of the Kodavas, this temple is located in Kakkabe. Every March, during the Kaliyarchi festival, his idol is taken around in a procession before being reinstalled in the shrine.

5.30am–12.30pm, 6.30–7pm

The early 19th-century Raja's Tomb in Madikeri



Accommodation

OFF MADIKERI

Evolve Back

RESORT ₹₹₹

📞 080 4618 4444; www.evolveback.com; Karadigodu Post, Siddapur; d from ₹39,000, inc full board & taxes Lying in the embrace of the 300-acre Chikkana Halli spice and coffee plantation, the cornerstones of the plus property are private pool villas, seven dining options, and an extensive Ayurveda spa.

Cottabetta Bungalow, an Ama Plantation Trails property in Pollibetta, Kodagu



The Ibnii

RESORT ₹₹₹

📞 080 46644333; www.ibnii.com; 123 Ibnivalavadi Village, Boikeri; d from ₹19,200, incl meals, excl taxes This 'eco-luxury' resort with private suites, villas, and wooden cottages is spread over 120 wooded acres. It manages to get you off the beaten track but still gives you access to fine dining and indulgent spa treatments.

The Windflower

RESORT & SPA ₹₹₹

📞 99014 46666; www.thewindflower.com; Survey No. 201/P1, Kedakal Village, Sunkikoppa Hobli, Somwarpet Taluk; d from ₹14,580, incl meals, excl taxes Built around a woodland area and coffee plantations, the resort sits in the lap of nature but does not stint on mod-cons in its rooms, suites, and bungalows. There's a pool, spa, and multicuisine restaurant too.

Taj Madikeri

RESORT ₹₹₹

📞 082722 65900; www.tajhotels.com; 1st Monnangeri, Galibeedu, Post; r from 12,500 onwards, incl breakfast Nestled amongst 18 acres of rainforest, the Taj is perfect for the eyes and the soul. Stunning views, guided wilderness hikes, spa time, and more make it a perfect antidote to the city.

Notting Hill

HOMESTAY ₹₹₹

📞 99400 52900; 1428, Stuart Hill; ₹9000 for the entire cottage The simple but immersive Notting Hill homestay is a cottage consisting of three bedrooms with attached bathrooms. It's ideal for a small group looking for privacy, and yet close to town.



If You Like: Living the coffee plantation life

For a 360-degree coffee experience, sign up for the Tata-run **Ama Plantation Trails** offered at multiple accommodations in Kodagu. You can live the plantation life and learn about Arabica and Robusta coffee—from picking, drying, roasting and even making your own brew (the best time for this is December–March). There are jeep safaris, nature walks, and birding mornings too. Most of the estate homes are heritage bungalows, with centuries of plantation history. 📞 99002 12119; www.amaplantationtrails.com; various locations in Coorg; d from ₹6000, incl breakfast and activities

Club Mahindra

RESORT ₹₹₹

📞 082722 21114; www.clubmahindra.com; Galibeedu, Madikeri; d from ₹8488, incl breakfast Come here for the classic experience of staying in a mountain-ringed coffee plantation. There's no shortage of luxury here, with three restaurants, a spa and two pools.

Victorian Verandaz

PLANTATION STAY ₹₹₹

📞 94480 59850; www.victorianverandaz.com; Modur Estate, Kadagadal Post; from ₹6000, incl breakfast for 2 couples Perfect for a family unit, the two rooms and dining area are charming and comfy. Fantastic valley views.

Serene Woods

HOMESTAY ₹₹₹

📞 94820 22348; www.serenewoods.co.in; Ibnivalavadi Village; d from ₹5500, incl breakfast, excl taxes A premium homestay with five luxury cottages overlooking forested green patches and coffee plantations. Thumbs up also for the delicious local cuisine and proximity to Madikeri town.

Silver Brook Estate

HOMESTAY ₹₹

📞 08272 200107; www.silverbrookestate.com; Kadagadal Village; d starting ₹4950, incl breakfast The wide verandah, spacious rooms, a handpicked collection of wooden furniture and the small library set apart Silver Brook. There's also an alluring garden and sunny sit-outs.

Mayura Valley View

HOTEL ₹₹

📞 08272 228387; www.kstcd.co; delux AC from ₹3599 Located close to Raja's Seat in Madikeri, Mayura Valley View has a welcoming vibe and spectacular mountain views. The central location and comfortable furnishings make it a top choice.

Gowri Nivas

HOMESTAY ₹₹

📞 08272 228597; www.gowrinivas.com; PO Box 138, New Ext Madikeri; d from ₹3750, incl breakfast It's in the heart of Madikeri, but Gowri Niwas seems like a secret getaway with only three cottages and a small garden in front. The cottages have an earthy feel with classy wooden furniture.



Kajaya is a festive deep-fried dessert

OFF KAKKABE

Tamara RESORT ₹₹₹

☎88840 00040; www.thetamara.com, Kabinakkad Estate, Napoklu Nad, Yavakapadi Village; d from ₹14,000, full board This plush hilltop resort is ideal

Snapshot: Kodava cuisine

The Kodagu region is home to the Kodava people—originally warriors—and their hearty cuisine is a highlight for foodies, especially for non-vegetarians who happen to love pork. Expect locally sourced, seasonal ingredients such as jungle mangoes, jackfruit, kembh leaves (edible colocasia), green chillies, and kachampuli, a dark vinegar.

for a bit of pampering after a rough day outdoors. The super-luxurious wooden cottages feature a private deck overlooking a 174-acre coffee plantation. Activities include birding, nature walks, and outdoor dining.

Honey Valley PLANTATION STAY ₹

☎08272 238339; www.honeyvalleyindia.in; PO Box Yavakapady; d from ₹1400, incl breakfast Tucked away on a 30-acre coffee plantation, Honey Valley can be reached only via a 4-wheel vehicle. Ask for a pick-up from Kabinakkad junction. Accommodation varies from basic (non-attached bathroom) rooms to slightly more elaborate set-ups. They also offer an exclusive trek to Tadiandamol, which consists of largely cattle tracks. Book ahead and discuss your stay with Mr Chengappa before arriving.

Chingaara PLANTATION STAY ₹

☎08272204488; www.chingaara.com; Yavakapady Village Post, Kabinakkad; d from ₹1518, incl breakfast Chingaara is yet another nature-inclined resort on a 12-acre plantation which shares the boundary with Honey Valley and must be reached in a 4-wheel jeep. Be awed by the view of a massive waterfall as you climb up towards the house. There are nine cheerful TV-free rooms looking down over the valley below.

Palace Estate HOMESTAY ₹₹

☎08272 238446; www.palaceestate.co.in; Kakkabbe, Near Nalknad Palace; d from ₹3600, incl breakfast With a

bright garden, a wooden double storey structure, and comfy rooms, Palace Estate is the closest option to Tadiandamol. Ask for the first floor rooms as they have a better view.

OFF KUSHALNAGAR

Eco Habitat HOTEL ₹₹₹

☎09448127245; www.ecohabitat.in; Chikbettageri Village, Guddehosur Post, Kushalnagar; d from ₹5400, incl breakfast Som and Chethana's Eco Habitat offers two immaculate cottages with personal splash pools. The cottages are spacious enough for extra beds, making this a good family option. Each meal is better than the last one, and Som is a fount of knowledge about Coorg's hidden gems.

Bel Home PLANTATION STAY ₹₹

☎08762061135; www.bellhome.co.in; Bellarimotte Estate, Madapura Post; d from ₹4200, incl breakfast Spend time in the verandah of the 1928-built cottages or relax in the sit-out of the wooden cabins. Near coffee plantations and Kotta Betta, Bel Home is run by third-generation planters Vijay and Ramola. They are great hosts and happy to guide you in a bean-to-cup coffee experience.

OFF KUTTA

The Jade HOMESTAY ₹₹

☎08274 244396; www.thejadecoorg.com; Manchalli, Kutta; d from ₹3500, incl breakfast and dinner Experience an exclusive stay in the old Coorgi

style house, after crossing a bright green patch of paddy fields. Apart from the charming low doored cosy rooms, this is a perfect place for those who want to trek to the Brahmagiri peak (base camp is just 2km).

Eating

Most people choose to eat where they stay, although Madikeri has some good options for local food.

Tiger Tiger COORGI ₹₹

☎9900492800; Raja Seat Rd; 12.20–9pm (Wed closed); mains ₹500–750 Close to Tiger's Seat, this family-friendly place serves pandi curry, ghee rice, and mango curry in the summer.

Raintree Restaurants MULTICUISINE ₹₹

☎08272220301; 13/41, Pension Lane, Behind Town Hall; 10.30am–3pm; 7–10pm (Sat/Sun 11.30am–10pm); mains ₹500–750 An upscale dining option set in a bungalow. The tender coconut payasam is especially delicious

Mayura Valley View Restaurant COORGI ₹

☎08272 228387; www.kstcd.co; near Raja Seat, Madikeri; noon–10.30pm; mains less than ₹500 Grab a seat by the window and feast your eyes on the misty mountains while enjoying your meal. It's a great centrally located spot for tasty local food, with plenty of veg selections.



HAMPI, BADAMI & AROUND

Why Go?

Hampi, a World Heritage Site and climbing hotspot, is a spectacle of boulder-strewn topography, dissected by the Tungabhadra River and offset by paddy fields and temple ruins dating to the Vijayanagara Empire. Badami, on the other hand, was the capital of the Chalukya Empire, and challenges climbers with its red sandstone cliffs.

Quick Facts

GETTING THERE & AROUND

Air: Hubli Airport and Jindal Vijayanagar Airport are the closest air nodes to Badami and Hampi. Hubli is 164km from Hampi and 106km from Badami. The Vijayanagar airport is 170km from Badami and only 35km from Hampi.

Bus & rail: The closest rail and bus head to Hampi is in Hospet (13km). From here, you can easily get an auto to Hampi. The Hampi Express provides a convenient overnight trip from Bengaluru to Hospet. KSRTC buses and private operators also offer overtrips to

Badami (approx 9 to 10 hrs) and Hampi (approx 8 hrs).

GREAT FOR



TOP PICKS

- **Bouldering in Hampi (p70):** Take on India's climbing capital.
- **Climbing in Badami (p72):** Find dozens of bolted routes.
- **Coracle rides (p71):** Drift along the Tungabhadra River.
- **Get high on heritage:** Hampi's ruins (p73) and Badami's cave temples (p75) are unmissable.

An ancient cave temple in Badami

Sights & Activities

HAMPI & ANEGUNDI

Bouldering & Rock Climbing

The landscape of Hampi is a climber's adventure playground, made of granite crags and boulders, some bearing the marks of ancient stonemasons. Banana Baba, Egg Boulders, Hot Slapper, and Sunset View are the epicentre of bouldering action at the **Hanumanahalli** area here, but there are many other locations too, such as **Rishimukh Plateau** and **Hemakuta Hill**. There are plenty of 'problems' marked out for seasoned climbers (with quirky names such as 'Why Like This' and 'Japanese Jump'), as well as easier areas for beginners. Other boulder activities here include

slack-lining and **rappelling**. Avoid peak summer (March and April) as the boulders get extremely hot. If you're new to climbing, do sign up for training from experts. Trusted local outfits include **Thimmaclimb** ([☎87627 76498](tel:8762776498); www.thimmaclimb.wixsite.com; classes 6.30–8.30am & 4.30–6.30pm; ₹5000 for 3-day 2-night trips incl stay and guidance) and **Tom and Jerry** (shop and guidance; [☎82777 92588](tel:8277792588); www.climbingshop.hampivillage.com). Useful guide books include *Climbing in Hampi and Badami* by Rohit Chauhan and *Golden Boulder* by Gerald Krug and Christiane Hupe.

Coracle Rides

Coracles, which are round basket-style boats, operate

A bouldering challenge at Hampi



Top Tip: Get oriented

The magnificent ruins of Hampi dot an unearthly landscape that has captivated travellers for centuries. While it's possible to see the highlights of this World Heritage Site in two or three days, to do justice requires a longer stay. The main travellers' hub is Hampi Bazaar, a village crammed with budget lodges, shops, and restaurants, and towered over by the majestic Virupaksha Temple. Tranquil Virupapur Gaddi across the river has also become a popular hang-out. Anegundi is an ancient fortified village that's part of the Hampi World Heritage Site, but predates Hampi by way of human habitation. It's less commercialised and retains a rustic feel. It's accessed by a river crossing or via a long loop from Virupapur Gaddi.

from two points in Hampi—near **Kodanda Rama Temple** and from **Talwarkatta** in Anegundi. It's a novel experience, affording a chance to see rock formations on the banks. If starting from the Kodanda Rama side, ask to see the thousand lingas and sleeping Vishnu sculptures on the rocks. ₹300–500 per head

irregular steps up to the top, where an unassuming temple is perched. Dawn—dusk

Daroji Sloth Bear Sanctuary

About 17km from Hampi, amid scrubby undulated terrain, this 83

Drifting down the river in a coracle is a unique way to observe Hampi

Hilly Hikes

Arrive early at the foot of **Anjanadri Hill** in Anegundi to beat the heat on your small trek up to the birthplace of Lord Hanuman. Very well-constructed 600 steps lead up to this unexpectedly simple temple milling with monkeys, from where you can soak in spectacular views of Anegundi village and the monuments across the river. **Mathanga Parvath** in Hampi, which is right opposite Virupaksha Temple, also affords excellent views of the dramatic landscape and monuments. It takes about 30 minutes to trek up



♥ If You Like: Heritage & culture

Hampi Utsav This cultural extravaganza in January includes music and dance performances and craft stalls galore against the beautifully lit-up structures of Hampi.

Hampi by Night A 4km night walk skirting the major temples and monuments of Hampi is one of the best experiences of the heritage town. The magnificent structures look even more glorious when lit up at night. The state-of-the-art **sound and light trail** quite literally illuminates the history behind each monument you stop at.

sq km sanctuary is a must-visit. You have a good chance of spotting the sloth bears from the watchtower, especially when they are fed at around 2pm. Binoculars are helpful. Adults/children/foreigner/camera ₹50/25/300/500; 1.30–6pm

BADAMI

Climbing & Bouldering

The large red sandstone crags of Badami are an enticing challenge for

The inhabitants of Daroji Sloth Bear Sanctuary



bouldering and climbing enthusiasts. There are about seven main areas and plenty more unnamed ones that are suitable for this activity.

Go-tos include **Saraswathi** and **Ganesha** areas (700m from Badami bus stand), **Delux** for long overhang routes (1km from the bus stand), the **Temple** area, which has one of India's toughest rock-climbing routes, the **Dyamamma** area, and the **Kannaragavi** area, which is also famous for a cave. It is best to do these activities under supervision or join a short course beforehand. Climber **Ganesha Waddar** ([@8494809253](https://www.instagram.com/ganesha_waddar) www.climbingbadami.in) is highly knowledgeable and helpful.

Trekking

Take a break from climbing and leg the length and breadth of Badami on the interesting heritage and nature trails here. North Fort, Raganath Temple and Bhootnath Temple take only about 2–3 hours, while full day walks include North Fort to South Fort and Hanuman Canyon to Bhoonath Temple.

TOP CHOICE Ruins of Hampi

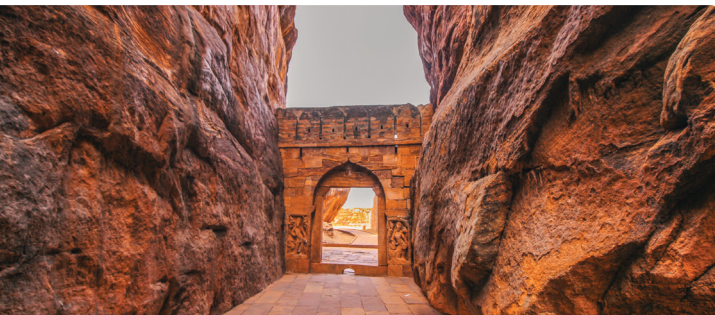
Set over 36 sq km, there are some 3700 monuments to explore in Hampi, and it would take months to do them justice. The ruins are divided into two main areas: the **Sacred Centre**, around Hampi Bazaar with its temples, and the **Royal Centre**, towards Kamalapuram, where the Vijayanagara royalty lived and governed. Here are some highlights that can be covered in a day or so. You can hire **cycles** (approx ₹100 per day) to speed things along.

Sacred Centre Here you will find the imposing **Virupaksha Temple**, one of Hampi's oldest structures and the only one that is still active. Also in this area is a large **Nandi statue**, around which stand some of the colonnaded blocks of the ancient marketplace. But the most breathtaking of all is the 16th-century **Vittala Temple**, which stands amid boulders around 2km from the bazaar. Its incredible sculptural work—including a stone chariot and 'musical' pillars—remains the pinnacle of Vijayanagara art.

Royal Centre & Around While it can be accessed by a 2km foot trail from the **Achyutaraya Temple** (marked by its pillared walkway which can be distinctly seen from the Mathanga Parvath), the Royal Centre is best reached via the Hampi–Kamalapuram Road. One of the most major sites here is **Mahanavami Dibba**, a 12m-high three-tiered platform with intricate carvings and panoramic vistas of the walled complex of ruined temples, stepped tanks and the King's audience hall. Don't miss the **Zenana Enclosure**. Its peaceful grounds and manicured lawns feel like an oasis amid the arid surrounds, and also house the **Lotus Mahal** and **Elephant Stables**.

The 11-domed elephant stables at Hampi are among the best-preserved buildings here





North Fort

A steep climb of 200m, along a stepped path above the lake area, is the historic North Fort. A short distance from the arched entrance are the open Mandapas, and further on, the 5th-century lower and upper Shivalayas (Shiva temples). The climb affords a panoramic view of the city and the caves across.

6am–6pm

Silidaphadi

A 3km walk from close to Badami bus stand will take you to a natural

A doorway at the Chalukyan-era Badami Fort

rock shelter, which spans more than 28m. The roof is perforated in places, allowing light to filter in. Look out for traces of prehistoric paintings, believed to date from the 1st and 2nd centuries BC.

6am–6pm

Agastya Lake & Around

The green Agastya Lake is a man-made stepped waterbody, which is used to store rainwater. The waters here are believed to have healing properties. There are several temples dotting the area, but of particular note are the two water-facing **Bhootnath temples** on the eastern edge of the lake. One was built in the 6th century and the other in the 12th. The older temple is a Shiva shrine; one of the caves behind it houses a sculpture of a sleeping Vishnu. Interestingly, the temples here do not have any mortar to hold the stones together.

6am–6pm

Top Tip: Get guided

For climbing activities as well as trekking, get in touch with local climber, Ganesh, at **Climbing Badami**. He knows the place inside out and is an excellent guide.

☎ 84948 09253; climbingbadami.in;

Climbing Badami office, Opp. Mallikarjun School Ranganath Nagar



Badami's cave temples

Badami's beautiful cave temples (entry Indians/foreigners/video camera ₹5/100/25; 6am–6pm) are a magnificent example of Chalukya architecture and date back to the 6th century. You can climb up to the four cave temples from the foot of the South Fort. Chiselled from deep red sandstone, the temples lie along a stepped pathway and are heavily patrolled by monkeys.

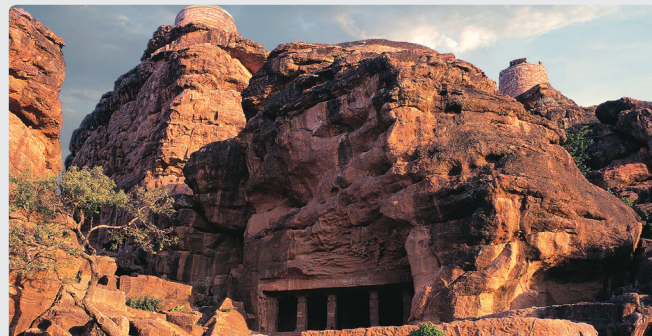
Cave One Just above the entrance to the complex, the oldest of the caves is dedicated to Shiva. On the wall to the right of the porch is a captivating image of Nataraja striking 81 dance moves in the one pose.

Cave Two As with caves One and Three, the front edge of the platform is decorated with images of pot-bellied dwarfs. Four pillars support the verandah, their tops carved with a bracket in the shape of a yali (mythical lion creature). Between the second and third caves are two sets of steps. The first leads to a natural cave with a small image of Padmapani (an incarnation of the Buddha). The second set of steps (barred by a gate) leads to the hilltop South Fort.

Cave Three Carved in 578, this is the largest and most impressive. Images on the ceiling include Indra riding an elephant, Shiva on a bull and Brahma on a swan. Keep an eye out for the image of drunken revellers, in particular one lady being propped up by her husband.

Cave Four Dedicated to Jainism, it dates to the 7th and 8th centuries. The inner sanctum contains an image of Adinath, the first Jain tirthankara. Do also visit the **Archaeological Museum** (₹5; 9am–5pm Sat–Thu), which houses superb sculptures from Badami, Aihole, and Pattadakal and prehistoric exhibits found near Badami.


The temples of Badami have been expertly sculpted into the rocks




Accommodation

HAMPI

Evolve Back Kamalapura Palace HERITAGE ₹₹₹

 080 4618 4444; www.evolveback.com; Kamalapur; 2-night package from ₹16,425 An ode to the 14th century Vijayanagara Empire, Kamalapura Palace takes you back in time with its fort-like entrances, stone-paved boulevards, arched hallways and regal chambers. The luxurious villas with private pools, Ayurveda offerings, cultural infusions, and upscale dining make this one of the most exquisite addresses in town.

Hampi's Boulders HOTEL ₹₹₹


 92426 41551; www.hampisboulders.com; Narayanpet, Bandi Harlapura Munirabad, Koppal District; d from ₹9499 This 'eco-wilderness' resort is the closest you'll get to luxury living in Hampi. There's a choice of themed rooms and chic cottages with

elegant furnishings, river views and outdoor showers. Rates include guided walks, and the restaurant's food is from their organic farm. The nature trail offered is packed with stunning rock formations viewed from a rickety wooden walk bridge and a vantage deck set up on a cave.

Mayura Bhuvaneshwari HOTEL ₹₹


 0839 4241574; www.kstdc.co; Kamalapur; d (AC Deluxe) from ₹2700 Mayura Bhuvaneshwari is the only hotel located within the World Heritage Site area of Hampi, and is the best hotel in this price bracket. Spacious rooms, warm hospitality, and a **cultural evening** (Sat 7–8pm) highlighting art forms such as Bharatnatyam, make it a winner.

Hampi Heritage and Wilderness Resort RESORT ₹₹

 94495 97874; www.junglelodges.com; executive cottage/cottage from ₹5756/3545, incl full board, jeep safari, Hampi Adjoining the Daroji Sloth Bear Sanctuary (p71) off Hampi, the resort is set in a rustic backdrop of boulders and splashes of greenery. It's the perfect place if you want to reconnect with nature. The simple rooms overlook the grand boulder-strewn landscape, which is most gorgeous when lit by the setting sun.

BADAMI

Krishna Heritage HOTEL ₹₹₹

 08357 221300; www.krishnaheritagebadami.com; Ramdurg Rd; d ₹7000, incl breakfast The most


Top Tip: Souvenir shopping

Hampi is sprinkled with small shack-like shops selling bohemian-style clothes and jewellery. In Anegundi, look for **Banana Fibre Craft Workshop** (10am–1pm & 2–5pm Mon–Sat) where you can watch craftsmen make a range of handicrafts and accessories using the bark of a banana tree and recycled materials.



luxurious address in town, Krishna Heritage offers lavish cottages with modern amenities and massive bathrooms. The hotel also has a semi open-air in-house restaurant, a travel desk and 24-hour room service. They can help with pick-up and drop and sightseeing tours.

Mayura Chalukya HOTEL ₹₹

 0835 7220046; www.kstdc.co; Ramdurg Rd, PWD Compound; d (AC) from ₹1850 The two blocks of the Mayura Chalukya hotel in Badami offer 14 rooms for a restful stay in

the historical city. It also has a nice restaurant and a beer parlour. The hotel is located less than 2km from the caves and other important sites.

The Heritage Resort HOTEL ₹₹

 08357 220250; www.theheritage.co.in; Station Rd; d from ₹2400/3000 non-AC/AC, incl breakfast Enjoy the grassy patch and a wonderful view of a large almond-coloured rocky outcrop from the sit-out of your cottage. Well-furnished interiors, clean bathrooms and an in-house restaurant clinch the deal.

Top Tip: Climb fest

The **Golden Boulders Climbing Festival** (www.hampiclimbingfestival.com) is a 10-day-long non-competitive set of events in Hampi. There are bouldering and slack-lining sessions, as well as some yoga workshops thrown in. It's a good way to meet people with similar interests. You can book online.



COASTAL KARNATAKA

Why Go?

Karnataka's sprawling coastline makes for one of the most inspiring landscapes on the western coast. Whether it's scuba diving in Netrani Island, surfing the waves at Mulki or Gokarna, or going dolphin-spotting in Karwar, you'll do more than just get your toes wet along this 293km stretch of relatively pristine seaside destinations.

Quick Facts

GETTING AROUND

The Karnataka coast covers three districts—Uttara Kanada, Dakshin Kannada and Udupi. The access hubs of these regions are Udupi, Mangaluru, and Karwar.

Air: Mangaluru airport is 9km from Mangaluru city and 53km from Udupi. Goa's Dabolim Airport is best to access places like Gokarna (157km) and Karwar (98km).

Train: Mangaluru and Udupi both lie on the Konkan Railway Belt and are well connected to most south Indian cities.

Bus & road: Mangaluru lies 353km west of Bengaluru. Overnight journeys

Riding the waves at Gokarna

by private and KSRTC buses take about 9–10 hours.

GREAT FOR



TOP PICKS

- **Mulki (p80):** A new surfing hub.
- **Netrani Island (p84):** Scuba diving and snorkelling.
- **Gokarna (p84):** Surfing and beach hiking.
- **Devbagh Beach, Karwar (p85):** Watersports galore.
- **Agumbe (p86):** Rainforest escape.

✓ Top Tip: Get oriented

Mangaluru, 353km west of Bengaluru, is the ideal base to start the stunning road trip along the west coast of Karnataka, right up north till Gokarna. Just inland from the coast, the holy town of Udupi is 58km north of Mangaluru. From Udupi, there are regular buses to Mangaluru (1.5 hrs), Gokarna (178km, 4 hrs), and the laidback fishing harbour of Malpe (6km, 30 mins). A worthwhile stopover for those taking the coastal route between Mangaluru and Gokarna is Murudeshwar, known for its colossal Shiva statue and as the access point for Netrani Island.

🎯 Activities & sights

MANGALURU, MULKI & UDUPI

Surfing around Mangaluru

Mangaluru has emerged as a surfing destination in the last few years, and the first to make waves were surfers Jack Hebner and Rick Perry, who set up **Ashram Surf Retreat** in the small village of **Mulki** (22km). Camouflaged by dense greenery, local homes and paddy fields, the retreat is complemented by the **Mantra Surf Club**, which focuses not only on riding the waves but also

Beachside yoga at Ashram Surf Retreat

on yoga, meditation, and simple veg food. There are six neat but basic rooms available to stay in, but you'll hardly be indoors, considering there are surf breaks like Baba's Left and Swami to manoeuvre. Instructors from the club can also help you try a hand kayaking, body-boarding, and wake-boarding. The Mantra Club has also over the years successfully engaged the local community, including children. Many of them are seasoned surfers and instructors now.

📞96631 41146; www.surfingindia.net; Mulki; d from ₹3900 (incl yoga, day activities and wi-fi); surf equipment & lessons ₹2000 per person



👤 If You Like: Surfing schools

Shaka Surf Club Located beyond Udupi at Kodi Bengre, Shaka offers surf classes against the backdrop of a fishing village. Accommodation is available in a basic but tasteful beachside camp.

📞99867 42710; www.theshakasurfclub.com; Kodi Bengre, Udupi; single sessions ₹1500 per person; board rental ₹1000 per session; 2 night 3 day packages ₹9000 per person, incl of 3 surfing lessons, accommodation, meals & use of kayaks, yoga lawn, skating park

Stoked (Mangalore Surf Club)

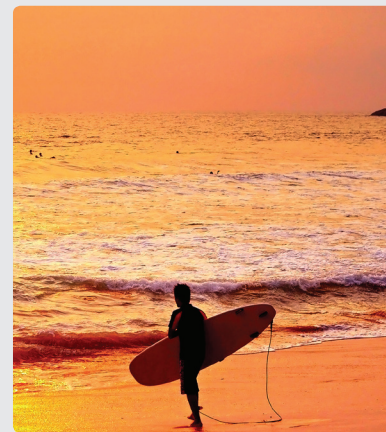
Sign up for certification courses and recreational learning.

📞9916812654; Tannir Bavi Beach 2, Sultan Battery Ferry Line, Kasba Bengre

Indica Surf School

Board rentals, kayaking, and introductory surfing lessons are on offer here. You can also opt for jet skiing and speed boating.

📞948292 7757; Panambur Beach Rd, Indian Oil Tank Farm, Kasba Bengre



Several surfing schools in the region offer lessons to beginners

🌊 Watersports & Dolphin Watching

The coastal stretch from Mangaluru to Udupi is great for recreational watersports such as parasailing, water scooters, banana boat rides, and jet skis that can be enjoyed by the whole family. In Udupi, get in touch with **Mani** (📞99167 73834; water bike/banana boat/dolphin watching ₹300/200/500) to try your hand at banana boat rides, water scooter rides and a trip to **New Clean Island**, 8km into the sea, off Udupi. On this trip, you can also expect to watch

dolphins. For guided parasailing and other activities on **Malpe Beach** (about 6km from Udupi), contact **Karavali Adventures** (📞94838 02939; www.karavaliadventures.com; parasailing ₹500 per head), although this stretch gets packed on weekends. Between 15 June and 30 September, you can also ride the rapids of **Seethanadi** (40km from Udupi) with the Bengaluru-based outfit **Adreno** (📞94481 66970; www.adreno.org). Experience up to class 3 plus rapids here on stretches ranging from 10–38km. There are a variety of packages

TOP CHOICE Spiritual discoveries

Someshwara Temple Located in Ullal, 9km off Mangaluru at the confluence of the Netravati River and the Arabian Sea, this Shiva temple stands at the site of a 16th-century fort and boasts a stunning backdrop. 6am–1pm, 3–8pm

Sri Krishna Math This 13th-century Krishna temple is a major draw in Udupi, with thousands of pilgrims queuing up for a darshan. Built by the Vaishnavite saint, Shri Madhwacharya, the temple is surrounded by eight *mathas* (monasteries) 5am–9.30pm; parking ₹10

on offer, including an overnight one with a stay at **Seethanadi Nature Camp**, a Jungle Lodges property.

Beaches near Mangaluru

A breezy stretch of beaches is one of Mangaluru's highlights, particularly the golden **Ullal Beach** across the Netravathi estuary, 12km south of the city; the Someshwara Temple here is well worth a stop. While some

Parasailing at Malpe Beach near Udupi



beaches are essentially fishing villages, others are more action-packed, such as **Panambur** (10km from Mangaluru) that even has some decent watersports facilities (jet skis, parasailing, banana boats) from October to February. Other options include **Tannir Bavi** (8km), and **Suratkal** (14km), home to the landmark **NITK lighthouse** (adults/children/foreigners/camera/video ₹10/3/25/20/25; 4–5.30pm; off limits in monsoon months).

Malpe Beach, Udupi

Located about 4km west of Udupi town, this pocket-sized paradise is understandably popular. It packs quite a punch with parasailing and jet ski operators (avoid monsoons) on the shoreline, and plenty of snack shanties (see p81 for watersports operators). Dawn–dusk

St. Mary's Islands

Off the coast of Malpe, this set of four islands (also known as Coconut Island or Thonsepar) are



The scenic coastal stretch makes for a delightful drive

distinguished by their unique lava rocks, earning it the status of a National Geological Monument. A 25-minute ferry ride from Malpe lands you in the middle of the crystalline rockscape, backed by swaying coconut palms. Ferry 9.30am–5.30pm (closed between June & September); entry ₹250

Padubidri Beach

A verified blue flag beach (suitable for boating), Padubidri Beach is a hidden gem, with clean sands and very little commercial clutter to sully its pristine beauty. People often flock here to enjoy the tranquil sunset. Dawn–dusk



Snapshot: Udupi-Murudeshwar coastal drive

Tiny fishing villages and small towns dot the coastal stretch from Udupi to Murudeshwar (102km). While they make for charming stops, do note that the waters are unsafe for swimming. **Mattu Beach**, 8.5km south from Udupi is a quiet spot, unlike the very popular **Malpe Beach** (p82). **Kaup/Kapu Beach** (15km) is rather tourist-savvy with a few shops, but the towering **lighthouse** (₹10; 4–6pm; monsoons closed) warrants a stop. Further along the highway, the drive around **Maravanthe Beach** (53km) is especially scenic. You'll find yourself turning your head from left to right, given that the road is flanked by the beach and the Souparnika River. You can stop here at the **Turtle Bay Resort** (www.turtlebayeco.com) for a meal. **Baindur Beach**, 30km from Murudeshwar, is a dramatic rocky outcrop. Follow the hillside along the beach for a better viewing spot from the top.

✓ Top Tip: Surfing at Gokarna

Gokarna is not typically known for surfing, but there are a handful of areas that are perfect to pick up the skill. **The Cocopelli Surf Club** (☎8105764969; Belehittal Rd, Dandebagh); courses range from 1.5hrs to 6 days) handhelds you through basic techniques and skills before you catch your first wave. You can also try kayaking here.

Jomlu Teertha Falls

The 6m Jomlu Teertha Falls on the Sita River are a 30km drive from Udupi, through a shady forested path flanked by cashew trees and dense undergrowth. Though the area is lush green and extremely beautiful in the rainy season, the water levels are alarmingly high. For closer access to the falls, it's best to go in the non-monsoon months.

MURUDESHWAR, GOKARNA & KARWAR

Scuba diving, Netrani Island

The temple town of Murudeshwar, 227km north of Mangaluru, is the access point to Netrani Island, 20km into the sea. Coral reefs and a variety of marine life are the biggest draws for adventure lovers. The visibility is much better (usually more than 15m) than other destinations in India (apart from the Andamans), so

doing recreational dives with PADI (Professional Association of Diving Instructors)-certified instructors offers a chance to spot all manner of exotic creatures. Reasonable packages are offered by **Netrani Adventures** (☎99004 31111; www.netraniadventures.com; weekend trips for ₹4999 incl accommodation and dive).

Beach hikes in Gokarna

Gokarna Beach performs the function of a bathing spot for devotees entering the Mahabaleshwar Temple, but other beaches nearby are better for hiking.

Om Beach, 4km from town, is made from two semi-circular coves joined in the middle, making a natural 'Om'. Walk up the dirt trail towards the cliff from Om Beach and you will find the path that goes towards **One Tree Point**. Get to the rocky divide, go past the casuarina trees and wild thorn bushes to climb higher, and watch the view of the sea below getting even more spectacular. Ten minutes into the hike, you will find one lone tree standing on the cliff that juts into the sea. From here, one can see the 'Om' shape clearly.

Kudle Beach is easily a 20-minute trek on a treacherous footpath from Om Beach. In the winter months, this clean 1km stretch of beach is dotted with sunbathers, volleyball players, and shacks.

More of a cove than a beach, **Half Moon** is somewhat of a hideout, away from the clutter. The small strip of rocky sand flanked by hillocks may not be awe-inspiring,

but it offers sanctuary from the crowds. It's accessible via a boat ride (₹500 per passenger). Once a party capital, **Paradise Beach** is more sedate now. It can be reached by foot or by boat (₹500).

Yana Rocks

Consider keeping a full day aside for the extraordinary sight of gigantic black rock formations shooting out from the middle of a dense forest, just 40km from Gokarna on Sirsi Road. From the car park, walk for over an hour in the silent, cool forest. At the end of this hike, and about 250 steps away, you will be rewarded by the sight of Bhairaveshwara Shikara and Mohini Shikara, two black limestone rocks that house temples in their caves.

Karwar & around

Located about 37km from Gokarna, Karwar has arrived on tourist maps for its spectacular beaches and islands that are studies in solitude.

Rabindranath Tagore Beach here is a pristine stretch of sand, where the great poet penned *Prakritir Pratishtoota*, his first play. Today, adventure lovers arrive mostly at nearby **Devbagh Beach** for snorkelling, scuba diving, jet skiing, banana boat rides, and the very popular dolphin-watching excursions. **Aligadda Beach** is known for its mild waves, ideal for surfing (activities can be booked on www.thrillophilia.com). While you're in the area, consider a boat ride to the 1679 **Oyster Rock Lighthouse** that stands in



The view from the bottom of Yana Rocks

magnificent isolation on an island 8km off the Karwar coast. Inside, the polished brass fittings, teak wood cabinets, and wrought-iron railings hark back to a past long lost. Boats cost ₹2000 for a return trip.



Snapshot: Murudeshwar Temple

Murudeshwar stands under the shadow of the 20-storey gopuram of an eponymous temple. Enter from a gate flanked by two elephant sculptures to the sanctum. A lift can take you to the 18th floor of the *gopuram* for a spectacular view of the Arabian Sea. A park behind the temple hosts a 37m statue of Shiva. 7am-7pm Mon-Fri, to 9pm weekends

Detour: Agumbe

With its tropical evergreen rainforest, waterfalls, and stunning biodiversity, Agumbe – 133km from Mangaluru and at an elevation of 643m – is the Western Ghats' answer to the famously rainy Cherrapunji in Northeast India. Visit to see why it is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. For reasons you may just find slithering at your feet, the biodiversity hotspot is also known as the king cobra capital of India. Here are some unmissable highlights of this wild and wonderful destination.

Kalinga Centre for Rainforest Ecology A safe way to find out more about the majestic king cobra is at the Kalinga Centre for Rainforest Ecology with founder P Gowri Shankar, about 7km from Agumbe village. Stay in tented accommodation in the 5-acre property and immerse yourself in nature. Opt to just soak in the abundance of foliage or attend well-constructed workshops/camps that acquaint you with all things snaky.
 ☎94808 77670; www.kalingacre.in; Kalinga Mane, Churrahakklu, Agumbe Hobli, Hosur Grama, Guddekere, Shivamogga; tariff for double tent incl full board and activities ₹2000; 3 Day Herp Camp ₹2500 per day/per person

Dodda Mane Visit Kasturi Akka's home, Dodda Mane in Agumbe. The claim to fame of this large century-old house is that two episodes of the legendary *Malgudi Days* were shot here in 1985. A family of eight still live in the house and entertain guests with local meals and anecdotes. You can stay here or just have a home-cooked meal. Call ahead at ☎081 81233075.

A bush frog in Agumbe, known for its biodiversity



Waterfalls There are several beautiful waterfalls in the vicinity of Agumbe, including Jogi Gundi, Onake Abbi, Barkana, Kundadri, and Kudlu Teertha. One has to walk anywhere between ½ km to 6km to reach these, so give it a miss during the monsoon season.

Dakshinamnaya Sri Sharada Peetham A 28km drive from Agumbe will take you to the famous Dakshinamnaya Sri Sharada Peetham at Sringeri. The shrine received patronage from the



The 91m Kudlu Teertha Falls is located on the Udupi-Agumbe Road


Vijayanagara rulers, followed by a number of other dynasties who were drawn to this seat of learning for the Sanatana Dharma (eternal order in Hinduism).

☎082 65250123; www.sringerisharadapeetham.org; 6am–2pm, 4–9pm; free community meals 12.15–2.30pm, 7.15–8.30pm

Accommodation

MANGALORE & UDUPI


The Ocean Pearl HOTEL ₹₹₹

 0824 2413800; www.theoceanpearl.in; Navabharath Circle, Kodialbail, Mangaluru; d from ₹7000 Decorated with black and white photographs of the coastal region, this Mangaluru hotel has spacious rooms and sparkling loos. A spa, swimming pool, and fitness centre are other bonuses.


Blue Matsya SELF-CATERING ₹₹₹

 98207 70427; www.bluematsya.com; Lighthouse Rd, Kaup Beach; d from ₹5000 (minimum 2 nights) Ideal for travellers who just want to dig their toes in the sand, Blue Matsya is just off the Lighthouse at Kaup Beach near Udupi. The white-walled home, dotted with blue windows, is extremely comfortable, although the sea views from the balconies are what make this place truly special.

Paradise Isle BEACH RESORT ₹₹₹


 78478 00800; www.theparadiseisle.com; 46, Malpe Beach; d from ₹3750, incl breakfast, excl taxes Located across St. Mary's Island and at the edge of the golden sands of Malpe Beach, this lovely sea-facing KSTDC resort boasts airy rooms, a pool, in-house dining, and watersports facilities.

Phalguni River Lodge RESORT ₹₹

 94831 12769; www.junglelodges.com; Piliikula Nisargadhama, Moodushedde Village; d from ₹3260 (double occupancy), incl breakfast Located near the


Gurupura River, this resort in Piliikule (15km off Mangaluru) offers an undisturbed tryst with nature. Extraordinary tree plantations surround the cottages and rooms. An Ayurvedic wellness centre, multicuisine restaurant, and bar mean you never need to venture far.

Diana HOTEL & RESTAURANT ₹

 72101 33600; Near Big Bazar, Jodukatte, Ajarjarad, Udupi; d from ₹1000 The new address of Udupi's popular Diana restaurant also has a spanning new set of rooms that are roomier and cleaner than many other lodgings.

MURUDESHWAR, GOKARNA & KARWAR


SwaSvara Wellness Retreat RESORT ₹₹₹

 95133 36924; www.cghearth.com/swaswara; Donibhail; 3-night packages approx ₹60,000 With indigenous design aesthetics melding seamlessly with modern amenities, this resort boasts spectacular rooms with a decidedly natural appeal. Well curated wellness packages for rejuvenation and treatments are the cornerstone of this property.


RNS Residency, Murudeshwar HOTEL ₹₹

 83852 68901; www.naveehotels.com; Murudeshwar Temple Main Rd; d from ₹3000 RNS overlooks Murudeshwar Beach (you can watch all the fishing action) and is just a stroll away from the Murudeshwar Shiva temple.

Om Beach Resort RESORT ₹₹

 08386 257052; www.junglelodges.com; Bungle Gudda; from ₹2758 per person, full board The JLR managed, Om Beach Resort is an excellent option to base yourself to explore the temple and beach town and veer off to the hills for hikes. The property is spacious and comfortable with Konkani-style cottages that overlook the vast sea.

Zostel HOSTEL ₹₹


 022 48962264; www.zostel.com; Kudle Beach Rd; dorm/private room ₹599/2015 Gokarna's first bonafide travellers' hostel: cheap rooms, great views, and excellent company converge here.

Devbagh Beach Resort RESORT ₹₹₹


 08382 221603; www.junglelodges.com; Devbagh Beach, Kodibagh, Karwar; d full board ₹6903 (incl all meals); day trips ₹1895 per head Devbagh has managed the feat of being the only resort on an incredible stretch of sand. The log cabins and cottages are spacious and water sports and nature walks are offered here.

Eating


Shetty Lunch Home MANGALOREAN ₹₹

 9945618222; Don Bosco Hall Cross Rd, Hampankatta, Mangaluru; mains ₹500–750; 11.30am–3.30pm, 6.30–11pm A local favourite for seafood biryani and other non-veg fare. The place claims that it invented the famous ghee-roast style of cooking.

Sannadige MANGALOREAN ₹₹

 8244245678; Balmatta, Mangaluru; mains ₹750–1000; noon–3.30pm, 6.30–11pm The Mangalorean-style pomfret, prawns, and mud crabs will delight seafood lovers.

Woodlands VEG ₹

 0820 2522807; Dr UR Rao Complex, Near Sri Krishna Math, Thenkapet, Udupi; mains below ₹200; 8.30am–3.30pm, 5.30–10.30pm An old-timer serving the beloved Udupi dosa along with several other north and south Indian dishes. The dingy basement restaurant is often packed with devotees from the Krishna Temple.

Top Tip: Beach bites

Gokarna has several beach shacks serving up Indian and Western cuisine. Popular eateries include the sea-facing and multicuisine Sunset Point (7.30am–10pm) on Om Beach. Many places close November–March.





DANDELI & JOG FALLS

Why Go?

Located in the jungles of the Western Ghats, Dandeli offers gut-churning whitewater rafting on the swirling waters of the Kali River. The low cool hills are also great for treks and nature walks. When you're in the area, don't miss a visit to the precipitous Jog Falls, which dare you to come close enough to feel the spray.

Quick Facts

GETTING THERE & AROUND

Dandeli: The closest airports are at Hubli (80km) and Goa (142km). The nearest railway stations are Londa (45km), Alnavar (36km) and Hubli. KSRTC provides overnight bus services from Bengaluru (460km) and other cities. To get around, it's best to hire an all-day cab.

Jog Falls: Jog Falls is about 172km from Dandeli. From Bengaluru, the most convenient way to get here is by an overnight KSRTC or private bus. Cabs and autos can be hired at Jog Falls. There is a taxi stand at the closest town Talaguppa (13km).

The 253m Jog Falls make for a spectacular sight

GREAT FOR



TOP PICKS

- **Rafting on the Kali River (p92):** Manoeuvre eight rapids.
- **Syntheri Rock (p93):** A gigantic monolithic boulder.
- **Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary (p93):** Spot sloth bears, leopards, flying squirrels, and more.
- **Jog Falls (p95):** India's second-highest waterfall.
- **Gudavi Bird Sanctuary (p97):** A treat for birders.

Sights & Activities

DANDELI

Rafting

Whitewater rafting on the Kali River is Dandeli's biggest lure for visitors, particularly in the months of October–May. Unlike most other rafting destinations, which are active in the monsoons, Dandeli's season begins after the rains. You can experience up to grade 3 plus rapids here on the 9.5km stretch from Ganesh Gudi to Maulangi. Jungle Lodges and Resorts organises good day-long rafting trips from **Kali Adventure Camp** and **Old Magazine House** in Ganeshgudi (see also p98). Safety is prioritised, and you are escorted by trained instructors and equipped with the right gear. Jungle Lodges and Resorts [📞9449599765/9480885303](tel:9449599765); www.junglelodges.com; ₹1350 per person

The picturesque Supa Dam reservoir



Trekking

The dense forest cover, temperamental Kali River, wild waterfalls, and mysterious caves around Dandeli make it a hotspot for adventure activities, including trekking, kayaking, zorbing, tree climbing, canyoning, rappelling, and crossing rivers on a rope bridge. For trekking, there are four major routes ranging between 5km and 10km; all of them take you through the emerald countryside of Dandeli and surrounding regions. The most popular—and easiest—is the **Kali and Maulangi hike** which takes you along the **Supa Dam reservoir**.

The **Nagjeri Valley trek** is the most thrilling one, and includes tramping into thick woods interspersed with waterfalls and streams. The **Dudhsagar Waterfalls trek** can start from villages Diggi and Qureshi, which are jeep rides away from Dandeli. The trek is 4km long plus 1000 steps down to the Dudhsagar Railway Station. The **Singar Trek** of 2km and a 300m hill climb is also popular. **Flycatcher Adventures** specialises in Dandeli trips. [📞9481050954](tel:9481050954); www.flycatcheradventure.com; treks ₹1000 per head inclusive of forest entry charges, food, transport and guide charges

Syntheri Rocks

This near-vertical 91m monolithic rock, with the Kaneri River splashing at its bottom, is worth each of the 250 steps you need to walk down to get there. Bleached by the sun and weathered by the ferocious water



The Kaneri River meets Syntheri Rocks

corroding its base, the rockscape features a myriad of colours and unique cave-like formations. Before you reach the parking lot, there is a long drive along a forest path, flanked by bamboo clusters. Entry adult/children/two wheeler/four wheeler ₹10/5/10/20; 8.30am–5pm

Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary

The best way to see the wild habitants of the Dandeli region is on a safari from the Pansoli gate of the wildlife sanctuary. Arrive early or ask your accommodation to book ahead as only a limited number of jeeps (16) are allowed per day. Only the buffer zone of the 845 sq km park can be accessed, but chances are high of spotting deer, elephants, gaur, bison, and a host of other mammals, along with an abundance

of reptiles and birds. The same stretch of the forest extends into Anshi, making the two regions part of the Anshi Dandeli Tiger Reserve. April and May are best for sightings. Pansoli; entry adult/child/ foreigner/ foreign child ₹400/200/1200/600; 6–8am, 4–6pm; trek ₹275 per head and ₹500 for a guide/group

Top Tip: Quick coastal excursions

For those who wish to have inland and coastal water adventures in one trip, Dandeli is a convenient detour from the beach destinations of Karwar (110km, p85) and Murudeshwar (129km, p84), respectively. Jog Falls are also conveniently located for Karwar (151km), Gokarna (110km), and Murudeshwar (87km).

Detour: Castle Rock

A day-long trip to Castle Rock in the monsoon is a favourite addition to a monsoon itinerary, as this is the time of year when the **Dudhsagar Waterfalls** descends in all its milky white glory. Many travellers take a cab till Castle Rock (65km) and then hop onto a train (mostly the 10am one) for a 15km meandering stretch to reach the Dudhsagar railway station. From here, you can see the waterfall and then get back conveniently on a returning train (mostly at 4.30pm) to Castle Rock. The waterfalls border Karnataka and Goa.

If you are arriving between November and May, a night's stay at John and Sylvia's farm, **Off the Grid** ([☎0832 3258928](tel:08323258928); www.farmoffthegrid.com; s tented stay full board & activities ₹3750), might just be something that the adventurer in you will love. The wonderfully isolated farm-stay has intentionally abstained from any supplied utilities like electricity, water, internet and phones to give a taste of being one with wilderness.

Anshi National Park

Part of the Kali Tiger Reserve, this part of the protected forest area lies 52km from the Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary's gate and is the less visited stretch due to the distance. The road leading to the national park is as breathtaking as the

jungle expanse itself. While there are no safaris in operation, trekking is possible. The Indian gaur, wild boar, barking deer, and many other mammals inhabit this region along with a sizeable population of reptiles

The magnificent 320m Dudhsagar Falls



and birds, including the great hornbill, Malabar pied hornbill, and Malabar grey hornbill. To experience camp life in this area, **Anshi Nature Camp** (www.dandelijunglelodges.com; [☎082842 31582](tel:08284231582), 99456 41704; directordatr@gmail.com) is your best bet.

Kavala Caves

Inaccessible during the rains, the Kavala Caves are a set of beautiful limestone stalagmite formations at the base of a cave. The spot is 25km from Dandeli and requires a climb down 375 steps followed by a crawl into a narrow cave to see a natural Shiva linga. Watch out for bats.

The Malabar pied hornbill at Anshi National Park

JOG FALLS

Waterfalls

There are two ways to see Jog Falls (also known as Gerusoppa Falls); one from Shimoga district, and the other when you hop across to Karwar just a few kilometres ahead. While the more popular Shimoga side is the point from where you see all four waterfalls together, the Karwar side has the closest access. You can start with the Karwar side and walk down a stepped pathway with landings used as viewing points.

✓ Top Tip: Pitstops between Dandeli and Jog Falls

Many travellers club Jog Falls with Dandeli, especially in the monsoon. Ensure that you start in the morning from Jog Falls to cover some sightseeing options en route. Make the first stop at **Unchali Waterfalls** off Siddapura (35km). You have to make a 5km trek from Heggarne to see the cascading water dropping from a height of 116m. This cannot be accessed in the monsoon. Next on the route is **Sahasralinga**, off Sirsi, which is a rockscape of Shiva lingas and a statue of Nandi on the bank of Shalmala River. The **Sathodi Waterfalls** lie 32km off Yellapur and can be reached almost completely by road, unless heavy rains make it impossible for smaller cars. The falls are 15m in height, making them fairly safe to get close to. Weekends get pretty packed.

From here you can get a glimpse of the falls by peering through the foliage. While visitors can actually walk right up to the head of Raja Falls, extreme caution is recommended.

The main entry point is better organised with 1500 steps leading down to the base of the falls. The stone steps have proper railings and unlike old times, when the path was

Keladi Temple is known for its pillar and ceiling carvings



not so well paved, the steep downhill climb is not too hard on the legs. You can get as close as 30m from the base of the falls and enjoy the spray. As expected, this is the most camera-happy place in Jog Falls. A commercial complex near the parking lot has a KSTDC restaurant. 7am–7pm

Gudavi Bird Sanctuary

This sanctuary is a delight to visit for the scenic ride through Sorab town and the isolated country roads that lead to it. The 182-acre sanctuary is surrounded by a moat in some parts and has two towers and a cemented path. Small jetties off the main path are good viewing pads to see birds like the grey heron, jungle fowl, waterfowl, Indian pond heron, cormorants, white ibis, the Indian shag, and more. The best months to visit are September and October. Indian/foreigner ₹50/300; 9pm–6.30pm

Boating in Muppane

A forested area that leads to a wide expanse of backwaters of the Sharavathi River, Muppane is one of those wonderfully isolated spots that the offbeat traveller will love. From the edge you can see a number of small islands, which can only be accessed by a boat (₹500 per ride). It's best to ask local auto rickshaw/cab drivers to get you here. 8.30am–5pm

Watersports at Talakalale

Surrounded by lush hills, the gorgeous Talakalale reservoir offers the chance to try your hand at kayaking and boating on the tranquil waters. The reservoir, made from the waters of the Sharavathi River, is best accessed from the **Sharavathi Adventure Camp**. ☎0818 6213399/ 9449599784; www.junglelodges.com; twin sharing from ₹3,287 per person, incl meals; day visit ₹1,180

♥ If You Like: Temple architecture


Keladi Temple Built in the Dravidian style with an infusion of Hoysala architectural features, the ancient Keladi temple is 31km from Jog Falls. The main attractions here are the weathered but intricately carved sculptured walls of the Rameshwara and Veerabhadra temples. Unfortunately, there's no priest or guide, but there is a **museum** (10am–5pm) displaying artefacts dating to the time of the medieval Keladi kings. **Ikkeri** Located about 38km from Jog Falls, Ikkeri—the erstwhile capital of the medieval Keladi Nayakas—houses a grand reminder of their rule in the form of the the Aghoreshwara (Shiva) Temple. The large carved columns of the temple with a massive Nandi in front add to the grandeur of the Hoysala and Kadamba architecture along with other fine nuances such as a highly ornate doorway, old Kannada manuscripts, and the sculptures of the 32 female figures.

Accommodation

It is best to eat at the in-house restaurants of your accommodation as Dandeli and Jog Falls only have small roadside eateries to choose from. Note that there are seasonal variations in rates at many places in both Dandeli and Jog Falls.

DANDELI


Hornbill River Resort RESORT ₹₹₹

 98806 83323; www.hornbillriverresort.in; Village Ambeli, Post Ganesh Gudi; d from ₹8000 (seasonal variations), incl all meals and activities The comfy treehouses and a deck at the edge of the river are the highlights in this 6.5-acre property. Unlike most tree houses, these are far

Rafting off the Bison River Resort


from rickety and feature large stable steps and well maintained interiors, including a tub in the bathroom.

Bison River Resort RESORT ₹₹₹


 08383 256539; www.indianadventures.com; Village Ambeli, Post Ganesh Gudi; d from ₹7800, incl breakfast


One of the oldest resorts on the banks of Kali River, Bison is a good pick for its access and view of the river (particularly for rafters), extremely hospitable staff, and spacious rooms. The first rapid of the Kali rafting stretch can be seen from here. Make sure you book the cottages closest to the river.

Kali Adventure Camp CAMP ₹₹

 94495 97871; www.junglelodges.com; Kogilban, Haliyal Taluk, Uttar Kannada District; tented accommodation from


Snapshot: Hase art

The Devaru community of the Jog Falls area has revived the ancient temple art known as 'Hase'. The finest example of this can be seen at **Chitrasiri** ( 94496 98979; Sitivante; 10am–6pm). The lady of the house personally paints and creates objects, which are usually used in marriages or ceremonious occasions. Hase art is inspired from nature and uses rust, yellow, black and white colours to depict daily life in villages or to illustrate traditional themes. You can pick door 'torans', pots, and smaller souvenirs to take back home.

₹3781, r from ₹4503 per person, incl full board This riverside getaway run by Jungle Lodges and Resorts (JLR) offers options to sleep in tented accommodations or rooms; the riverview tents are the most atmospheric of all. Indoor games, rafting, safaris in the jungle, and nature walks with a naturalist are among the activities offered here. The food is simple but delicious. A more rustic choice by JLR nearby is a five-room property called **Old Magazine House** ( 94808 85303). It is located in a patch of jungle that the rest of the public does not have open access to, making it a great option for those wanting to get off the grid a bit. You can book whitewater rafting trips at both the JLR properties. .

JOG FALLS

Mayura Gerusoppa (KSTDC) HOTEL ₹₹

 0818 6244732; www.kstdc.co; Jog falls; Sharavathi Block; d from ₹2100 The well maintained Sharavathi block of the

KSTDC hotel inside the Jog Falls complex is one of the most popular picks for travellers visiting Jog Falls. Given the vantage location and facilities, it is often packed. (The smaller Tunga block is aimed at backpackers). Making this place an even better deal are the in-house restaurant and a helpful desk that can arrange sightseeing excursions for you. All bookings should be done online.

Sharavathi Adventure Camp

 94495 99767; www.junglelodges.com; Kargal-Jog falls Sagar Taluk, Shivamoga District; r from ₹3287 per person, incl full board The adventure camp lies only 4km from Jog Falls and serves not only as the perfect base to visit it but to escape into nature in general (there's no TV and limited connectivity). There are 20 cosy cottages perched on a hillside that overlook the Talakalale reservoir. The camp also offers a number of activities, ranging from pedal-boating and kayaking (see p97) to nature walks and birdwatching.





BANDIPUR & NAGARHOLE

Why Go?

Bandipur and Nagarhole national parks, which can be covered in one trip, are part of the 2183 sq km Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Sightings of the Indian bison, Asiatic elephants, deer, boar, dhole, and tigers are possible in both parks. Nagarhole is also home to the sprawling Kabini reservoir, where coracle rides sooth the nerves after adrenaline-packed safaris.

Quick Facts

GETTING THERE & AROUND

Air: The closest airports are Mysuru (73km) in Karnataka and Kannur (approx 150km) in Kerala.

Bus: KSRTC buses from Bengaluru's Kempegowda bus stand go to both Bandipur or Nagarhole. Get down at the forest checkpost and ask for a pick-up from your resort. Overnight buses are most convenient.

Cab: Booking a cab (₹10–12 per km, minimum 300km, ₹200 per day driver allowance) to arrive and to get you around gives most flexibility.

GREAT FOR



TOP PICKS

- **Jeep safari in Bandipur (p102):** Spot tigers and elephants
- **Boat safari in Kabini (p103):** Look out for birds and crocodiles
- **Mangala village walk (p103):** See the world of the Kurubas.
- **BRT Sanctuary (p106):** Jungle treks and safaris


Peacocks are easy to spot in Bandipur National Park

Sights & Activities

BANDIPUR

Jeep safari

The 880 sq km expanse of Bandipur, is a delight for wildlife enthusiasts. Don't be surprised if you see elephants, deer, and wild boar crossing the road, while deeper in the forest, you have a chance of spotting tigers, leopards, hyenas, and sloth bears. Look up at the trees and you are likely to spot many avian species, including the Indian silver bill, scaly breasted munia, and the purple rumped sunbird. Safaris are operated solely by the forest department. Ask your hotel to book one in advance for you since there is a cap on vehicles allowed inside the forest.

 0821 2480902; Bandipur Forest Information Centre; Indian/child/foreigner/camera/₹350/250/1500/200; Gypsy rental (seats 6) ₹3000 (seats 6) 6.10–9.45am; 2.30–6.30pm

A vehicle safari in progress at Bandipur National Park



Mangala village walk

The Bandipur region was the erstwhile abode of the Kuruba tribe, who were shepherds and beekeepers. While their settlements have eroded over time, there have been some attempts at cultural revival at Mangala village, now home to a set of resorts and some remaining Kuruba households. Take a walk in the village with a local to connect with a culture that in some ways straddles different eras.

Himavad Gopaldaswamy Betta

Get a stunning bird's-eye view of the forest from the hilltop Krishna Temple at 1455m, the highest peak of the Bandipur hills. It's a 21km drive from the Bandipur checkpoint on your way back. 8.30am–4pm

Birdwatching & nature walks


The avian inhabitants of the forest cover are easy to spot around most resorts and hotels. Wake up early and follow the in-house naturalist to spot some endemic birds and flora in trails around the property.




Water is no longer in short supply for Bandipur's animals thanks to solar pumps

NAGARHOLE (KABINI)

Jeep safari

Expect to see herds of chital, sambar, gaur, and Asian elephant (a particularly heart-stopping sight) at Nagarhole; you may also see tigers, leopards, and packs of wild dogs. There are 300 species of birds in the forest, so keep binoculars handy. Veeranahosalli entry ( 95911 39114)

and Nanchi Gate from Kutta side in Coorg ( 96325 66454); Nagarhole National Park; www.junglelodges.com; 6.45–9am and 3–5.30pm; entry/camera ₹1300/500.

Boat rides

Coracle and boat rides are offered by all resorts that are located around the Kabini reservoir. Sunsets are especially stunning, and you are likely to see crocodiles and birds aplenty.

Top Tip: Nagarhole by area

If you were to explore the park by regions, the northern edge would offer views of the Kabini reservoir and chances of seeing animals having a drink. In the southeast, the topography is largely dry and excellent for spotting predators and birds. The centre again has backwaters where elephants, gaur and deer are sighted easily. The west is denser, and the topography consists of mountains, streams, waterfalls, and bamboo thickets.

Accommodation

BANDIPUR

The Serai Bandipur RESORT ₹₹₹

 94898 23601; www.theserai.in; Kaniyanapura Village, Chamrajnagar District; d from ₹14,500 This 36-acre property provides a lavish stay in seemingly rustic environs. The courtyard, cabin, and cottages are white-walled, with traditional stone work and thatched roofs. There are mod-cons like a spa, pool, and gym, but 17 acres remain uncultivated to blend in with the surroundings.

The Windflower Jungle Resort and Spa RESORT ₹₹₹

 99014 466666; www.thewindflower.com; S No. 125 Mangala Village, Bandipur, Chamrajnagar District; d from ₹10,710 (flexible rates) The cottages and suites

Visitors enjoy a boat ride near the Kabini River Lodge, as elephants graze in the background

here are camouflaged by a dense copse of trees, and there is no TV or internet on offer for that off-the-grid experience. Nonetheless you will find all the other components of a high-end resort, including a pool with forest views, and a spa where you can enjoy massages.

Dhole's Den LUXURY HOMESTAY ₹₹₹

 94456 62210; www.dholesden.com; Kaniyinapura Village, Bandipur National Park, Gundlupet Taluk, Chamrajnagar District; d from ₹10,240 (flexible rates) Rainwater harvesting, wind turbine-generated electricity (indicated by green switches) and accommodation for 16 at a time are big pluses at this eco-friendly homestay. Luxury units with wide airy balconies come alive with bright animal themed art and lively furnishings. The meals are simple but delicious and offer plenty of choice. The staff are warm and resourceful.

Bandipur Safari Lodge RESORT ₹₹₹


 94495 97880; www.junglelodges.com Mysore-Ooty Rd, Melukamanahalli, Angala Post, Gundlupet Taluk, Chamrajnagar District; cottages from ₹7208 per person, incl full board This landmark JLR property houses 22 comfortably furnished cottages amidst 9.5 lush acres. The 'Gol Ghar' (common gazebo), restaurant, and the bonfire area are often teeming with families, so it may not appeal to those who want a quieter stay. Still it's a great place from where to set off on treks and canopy trails.

NAGARHOLE

Evolve Back RESORT ₹₹₹

 080 4618 4444; www.evolveback.com; Bheeramballi, Kote; d full board from ₹24,999 A glass of wine overlooking the Kabini reservoir is the perfect antidote to a long jungle safari. There are also four exquisite dining experiences (one even on a cruise in the reservoir), an infinity pool, reading lounge, and an Ayurveda spa to keep you hooked to the property.

Bison LUXURY TENTS ₹₹₹

 080 4127 8708; www.thebisonresort.com; Gundathur Village, Karapura, Kabini Rd, Nissana Hobli, Heggadadevankote; d from approx. ₹ 17,000 (visit website for seasonal deals) The African-style bush tents keep the jungle vibe alive but do not stint on comfort or aesthetics in the form of wooden floors, vintage artefacts, old cabin trunks and antiques. It's quite common to spot

elephants grazing, along with other animals, right from your tent. There are also machan-style lodgings and cottage rooms and suites.

Red Earth RESORT ₹₹₹

 87227 45555; www.redearthkabini.com; Badane Kuppe (Near Hosamalla), Via Antharasante, HD Kote; d from ₹13,500 Even though it's a luxury resort, Red Earth has a homely vibe with an informal atmosphere. Enjoy the proximity to the forest at the edge of the Kabini reservoir. There are 20 cottages, cocooned by flower beds and plants. The open-to-sky showers ensure that you're always in the company of wilderness—well, almost. Largely Indian cuisine can be found at the in-house restaurant. A spa, pool, nature walks and cultural evenings make the stay engaging.

Kabini River Lodge RESORT ₹₹₹

 08228 264402; www.junglelodges.com; Kabini River Lodge, Nissana Beltur Post, HD Kote Taluk; s full board from ₹9688 Located on the fringes of the forest, the 54-acre property has first-row seats to excellent animal sightings and the sprawling Kabini reservoir. It is not uncommon to spot herds of elephants or crocodiles sunning themselves by the banks, and birds silhouetted against an orange sky in the evenings, right from the comfort of your room. Elegant rooms and common areas, and in-house dining makes this one of the most coveted properties of the area.



Detour: BRT Wildlife Sanctuary

Located at the confluence of Western and Eastern Ghats, the Biligiri Ranganatha Wildlife Sanctuary (BRT Wildlife Sanctuary) is a mosaic of scrub, grasslands, and deciduous, riparian, and evergreen trees. The protected reserve is only 171km from Bengaluru and easily reached by road. Declared a tiger reserve in 2011, the sanctuary draws interest not just from those who are obsessed by the striped cat, but also enthusiasts who want to see a rich ecosystem thriving with four-horned antelope, tigers, leopards, wild dogs, and other mammals. There are over 245 species of birds in this forest too, making it an excellent destination for birding enthusiasts as well. This region is also home to the Soliga tribe. Having lived off the

forest for generations, this tribe has a special affinity towards the flora and fauna of the jungle.

Jeep safaris: The K Gudi Wilderness Camp here has two jeep safaris every day (6.30am & 4.30pm). Tiger sightings are rare, although you can often spot elephants, herds of deer, and the white-socked bison.

Jungle treks: A number of well-marked forest trails are open to trekkers, though it is recommended to not stray from these.

Biligiri Ranganathaswamy Temple: Although Soliga people are nature worshippers for the most part, they also revere Lord Venkatesh, called 'Biligiri Ranganatha' locally, who

Elusive leopards can sometimes be sighted at BRT Wildlife Sanctuary



White-socked bison are among the many animals you can spot at BRT Wildlife Sanctuary

gives his name to the land and the hills. The temple is the site of much festivity during early summer, when the annual spring festival takes place. But something to be relished all year round is the view of the dense green hills, unfolding up to the horizon. An hour's walk away from the camp, the climb up to the temple can be quite steep. 7am–8pm

Lodges property gives visitors an opportunity to stay at the edge of the forest and wake up to bird song, and sleep to the lullabies of the jungle. Visit the forest with naturalists in a jeep safari and return in the evening to the Gol Ghar, the dining and meeting hub. Choose between well-maintained log huts, tented cottages, and rooms.

Accommodation

Kyathadevara Gudi Wilderness Camp

JUNGLE LODGE ₹₹₹

 94495 99790; www.jungleslodges.com; K Gudi Wilderness Camp, P.O.

Kyathadevarayana Gudi, Chamarajnagar; r and tented cottages from ₹5576, incl full board and activities This Jungle

Mayura Biligiri (KSTDC) HOTEL ₹

 08226 244111; www.kstdc.co; d from

₹999 Located at the edge of the BR Hills, this government-run hotel has first row seats to nature's best. Breathe in clean air, eat wholesome food, and fill your days with nature walks, birdwatching, and wildlife spotting before returning to your well-outfitted room (no ACs though) for a restful night.

INDEX

A

accommodation, 12, *see also individual locations*
 aerosports (microlight flying), 16, 26, 56
 Agumbe, 86–87
 Anshi National Park, 94–95

B

Badami, 69, 72, 74, 75
 accommodation, 76–77
 Bandipur, 101, 102
 accommodation, 104–105

Bannerghatta

National Park, 28
 Bengaluru, 24, 26–29
 accommodation, 36–38
 eating, 39–43

Bheemeshwari, 44–45

birdwatching, 29, 32, 45, 53, 102
 boating & coracle rides, 19, 35, 53, 71, 81, 82, 84, 85, 97, 103
 bouldering & rock climbing, 26, 28, 31, 34, 35, 70, 72, 74

BRT (Biligiriranganatha) Wildlife Sanctuary, 106–107

Bylakuppe, 61

C

camping, 19, 31, 60–61
 Castle Rock, 94
 Chikkamagaluru, 47–53
 accommodation, 52
 activities/sights, 48–51
 climate, 10–11
 Course Busters, 29
 cycling, 16, 20–21
 Bengaluru, 26–27, 32

mountain biking, 45, 53
 Nandi Hills, 33

D

Dandeli, 91, 92–95
 accommodation, 98–99
 Daroji Sloth Bear Sanctuary, 71–2
 dolphin-watching, 81–82
 Dubare Elephant Camp, 61

E

Eagles Unbound Adventure Park, 29
 eating, 12–13. *see also individual locations*

G

Galibore Nature Camp, 17, 44–45
 Gokarna, 84–85
 accommodation, 88–89
 Gudavi Bird Sanctuary, 97

H

Hampi, 69, 70–72
 accommodation, 76
 eating, 77
 shopping, 77

J

Jog Falls, 91, 95–97
 accommodation, 99

K

Karwar, 85
 accommodation, 88–89
 kayaking & canoeing, 17, 34, 44, 45, 53, 58–59, 81, 84, 92
 Kodagu (Coorg), 55–67
 accommodation, 64–67
 activities/sights, 56–62
 eating, 66, 67

M

Mangaluru, 79, 80–84
 accommodation, 88
 eating, 89
 marathons, 28
 motorsports & biking, 18, 28, 29
 Mulki, 15, 80
 Murudeshwar, 18, 84–85
 accommodation, 88–89

N

Nagarhole National Park, 19, 101, 103
 accommodation, 105
 Nandi Hills, 25, 32–33
 accommodation, 39
 eating, 43,
 Netrani Island *See Murudeshwar*

P

packing, 11–12

R

rafting
 Bhadra River, 51
 Kali River, 14, 91, 92, 98
 Nisargadhama, 61
 Barapole River, 21, 56
 Ramanagara, 25, 31–32
 accommodation, 38
 eating, 43
 River Tern Lodge, 53

S

scuba diving, 18, 84, 85
 surfing, 15, 80, 81, 85
 Syntheri Rocks, 93

T

tourist information, 11
 tour operators, 12
 trekking & hiking

Badami, 72
 Ballalarayana Durga, 49
 Bengaluru, from, 34–35
 Bheemeshwari, 44
 Big Mountain Loop 48
 Brahmagiri, 57
 Dandeli 92
 Gokarna, 84
 Hampi, 71
 Kotte Betta, 58
 Kudremukh, 14, 48, 50
 Manangeri, 62
 Mullayanagiri 48
 Nandi Hills, 33
 Ramanagara, 31
 Tadiandamol, 14, 21, 59
 tour operators, 12

U

Udupi, 79, 80–84
 accommodation, 88
 eating, 89

W

walking excursions, 27, 29, 51, 102
 waterfalls
 Abbi Falls, 62
 Agumbe, 87
 Dudhsagar, 92, 94
 Hebbe Falls, 50
 Iruppu Falls, 57, 58
 Jog Falls, 95–97
 Jomlu Teertha Falls, 83
 Malalli Falls, 58
 Shivasamudra, 35
 wildlife safaris, 28, 49, 53, 93, 94, 102, 103, 106, 107
 winery tours, 33

Y

Yana Rocks, 85

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Karantaka is especially close to her heart as she kicked off her solo wanderings discovering different corners of the state and wrote her first travel book about weekend getaways from the capital. Even a decade later, she finds it one of the most inspiring destinations in India.

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