

ANDHRA PRADESH

APRIL-JUNE 2018

JOURNEYS

CLOSE TO NATURE

**HORSLEY
HILLS**

**HERITAGE
LEPAKSHI**

**TIRUMALA
TOUR
PACKAGES**

COVER STORY

TIRUPATI
TEMPLES, FOOD
AND GETAWAYS

**ART & CRAFT
KALAMKARI**

**FESTIVALS
AP TOURISM**





Government of
Andhra Pradesh

ANDHRA PRADESH JOURNEYS

Mukesh Kumar Meena, IAS

Editor-in-chief

Secretary, Tourism & Culture,
Government of Andhra Pradesh,
A.P. Secretariat, Velagapudi,
Amaravati, Andhra Pradesh

Ravi Kumar Boppana

Executive Editor

Toll free: 1800-42-545454

www.aptourism.gov.in

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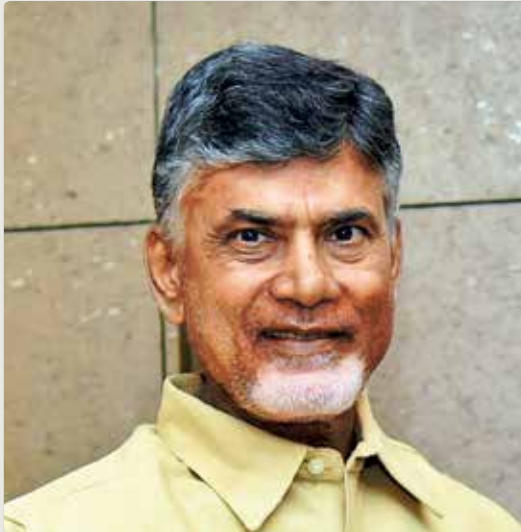
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DISCLAIMER: VIEWS AND OPINIONS EXPRESSED IN THE MAGAZINE ARE THOSE OF WRITERS.

ON THE COVER The dome of Lord Venkateswara Temple, Tirumala. Photograph: Andhra Pradesh Tourism



CM's Address

Nutana samvatsara subhakanksalu.

I welcome you to the second edition of *Andhra Pradesh Journeys*, and strongly appreciate your positive response to the first edition of the Andhra Pradesh Tourism magazine.

The sunrise state of Andhra Pradesh is a place where opportunities bloom. Blessed with many beautiful, historic and vital destinations, the state serves travellers of all age groups and interests. The all-weather state is also where a greater number of people turn for business. The state has infrastructure and facilities to serve all these visitors. You can find a glimpse of this in the magazine.

It is our endeavour to help visitors, whether pilgrims or tourists, have a comfortable stay and a memorable experience in Andhra Pradesh. With rich information on destinations, accommodation options, packages and helpline channels, the magazine is a handy guide for travellers from India and abroad.

I once again appreciate the efforts of the AP Tourism team involved in bringing out this magazine. I hope you find the colourful edition useful.

N. CHANDRABABU NAIDU
CHIEF MINISTER OF ANDHRA PRADESH



It is a pleasure to connect with you through the second edition of *Andhra Pradesh Journeys*—a magazine that presents the vibrant colours of Andhra Pradesh. I am grateful for the consistent support and guidance provided by our Chief Minister in our initiative to reach out to travellers the world over through this magazine.

Andhra Pradesh is a great value destination. A perfect balance of buzzing cities and untouched countryside, it has incredible sights to be seen and a multitude of destinations to be explored. The nature lovers have beaches, mangroves, valleys and tribes. The believers have revered, ornate temples that play host to millions of people every year and ancient shrines that are the abode of spirituality. The business travellers have a choice of boutique hotels that offer a perfect work-life balance; the thrill seekers have water sports; and the well-heeled have occasions to party on a yacht. There's good food, shopping and festivals that add to the grandeur. If you know what you want, Andhra Pradesh has a place where you can find it.

Rich with informative content on varied tourism experiences, *Andhra Pradesh Journeys* offers a window to Andhra Pradesh's amazing diversity. It is an invitation to you to visit the state and give us a chance to host you. We look forward to meeting you soon.

BHUMA AKHILA PRIYA

MINISTER FOR TOURISM, CULTURE AND TELUGU LANGUAGE

PARTNERSHIPS TO BOOST TOURISM

A grand success, the CII Partnership Summit and Sunrise Andhra Pradesh Investment Meet witnessed inking of 56 MoUs in the tourism sector



Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, Tourism Minister Bhuma Akhila Priya, Secretary, Tourism and Culture, Mukesh Kumar Meena, and other dignitaries at the CII Partnership Summit in Visakhapatnam in February 2018.

Andhra Pradesh Tourism signed 56 memorandums of understanding (MoUs), with an investment of ₹7,806 crore, on the first day of the three-day CII Partnership Summit and Sunrise Andhra Pradesh Investment Meet held in Visakhapatnam in February. Under these MoUs, the department is partnering with private investors to create new infrastructure.

“The major focus this time has been on serious investors. We have taken steps to take back land from non-serious investors and give it to committed investors with a strong project blueprint. This will be our

strategy going forward,” said Bhuma Akhila Priya, Minister for Tourism.

One of the major focus areas of the department is building more water and adventure sports zones. At Mulapadu and in Araku, an adventure training tourism centre is coming up. The Essel Group is coming up with an adventure park on Bhavani Island at ₹500 crore. A Centre of Excellence for Performing Arts is planned at ₹80 crore in Amaravati. Rural tourism and farm stays will be taken up in the Krishna and Visakhapatnam districts.

The department this year is focusing on six key projects. These



BEST BEACH DESTINATION

Andhra Pradesh has bagged the award for Best Destination-Beach Tourism at the PATWA International Awards Ceremony on March 8, 2018 at ITB Berlin. The award was received by Mukesh Kumar Meena, Secretary, Tourism and Culture, Government of Andhra Pradesh. Handed out once a year in March at the world's biggest travel and trade fair, these awards are considered among the most coveted and sought-after in the travel trade.

are the Special Tourism Zone at Madhurawada and *INS Viraat* aircraft carrier museum in Vizag, Havelock Bridge in Rajahmundry, Bhavani Island in Vijayawada, a beach property at Kakinada Hope Island, and the Gandikota Fort adventure sports zone. ■

APTDC GETS NEW BUSES

Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu along with Minister for Tourism Bhuma Akhila Priya recently flagged off four APTDC Volvo buses in Vijayawada. The new buses will ply the long-distance inter-state routes from Tirupati to cities such as Bengaluru, Chennai, Madurai and Coimbatore. The multi-axle Volvo buses have been purchased at ₹1.30 crore each and have all the modern facilities.



Authentic experiences

If you are heading to Andhra Pradesh this summer, do try to take in local flavour. Watch young performers learning captivating Kuchipudi in a quaint coastal village, savour succulent Banginapalli, or explore the beautiful temple architecture. Here are a few experiences we highly recommend.

Illustrated by Pooja Sethi Gautam

1 RELISH THE SUMMER FRUITS

The season may be harsh on people in the coastal belt. So why not find ways to cool off? One way is eating summer fruits such as mango, watermelon and palmyra—known for its delicious, cool spongy jelly. The yellowish cashew fruit is another big hit in the dry upland rural areas. Stop anywhere in the state to have the sought-after tender coconut for its sweet water and jelly-like kernel.



2 VILLAGE IS THE WAY TO GO

Pristine, peaceful and lush, rural Andhra Pradesh boasts simple lifestyles and traditional practices. The long stretches of green paddy fields, dusty roads and thatch-roofed homes reveal the true beauty of the land. Sit at a roadside eating joint and sample the local fare, enjoy birdwatching, fishing, bullock cart rides, boating and trekking, or watch artisans making beautiful crafts.



3 GO ON THE GI FOOD TRAIL

Andhra Pradesh has the coveted Geographical Indication (GI) tag for the succulent Benishan (or Banginapalli mangoes) that have been growing in the state for over 100 years. The thick, red-skinned Guntur Sannam Chilli is another GI food you must try. The divine Tirupati laddoo and rich Bandar laddoo are also on the GI list.



4 HAVE FUN WITH JUMBOS

Jungle lovers can have a date with elephants at Koundinya Wildlife Sanctuary near Horsley Hills (150 kilometres). The sanctuary was set up in 1990 to accommodate elephants who had migrated back to the area after 200 years of living away. Go on an elephant safari for thrills or take a jeep safari to track elephants—a truly educational experience to have.



5 A PALEOLITHIC WONDER

If you are on a work trip in Vizag and can only manage a little "vacation time", pick the Borra caves for a day trip. This 150 million years old, naturally created cave complex is a marvel of the middle Paleolithic era. It helps that the caves remain very cold even in the peak of summer. The site is also famous for the amazing sound and light show installed for tourists.

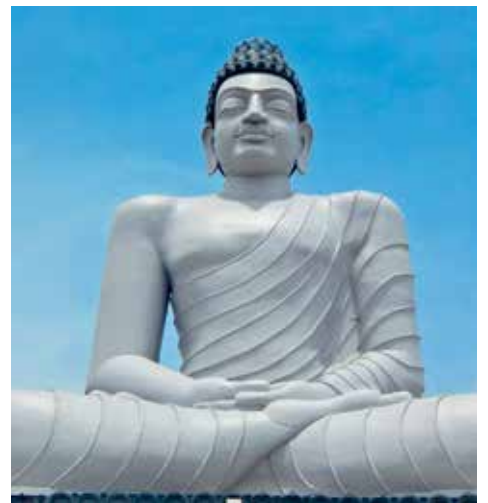
6 EXPLORE NEW ATTRACTIONS

Visakhapatnam recently got the new TU 142 Jet Museum at RK Beach. After serving the Indian Navy for 29 years, this jet is now making people understand aircraft technology and equipment like a sonobuoy, propeller, survival kit, anti-submarine missile and data recorder. Another must-do is the new air-conditioned water bus plying on the Krishna at Bhavani Island in Vijayawada.



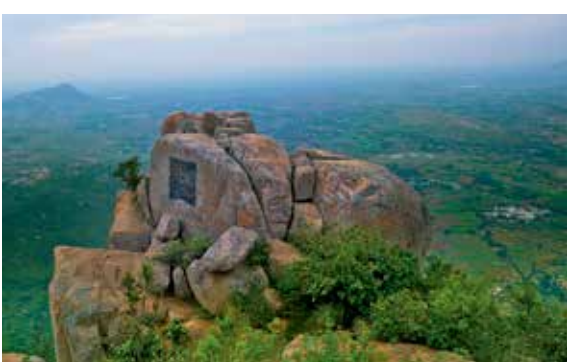
7 LED BY BUDDHA

This Buddha Jayanti, visit Amaravati, the heritage city where Gautama Buddha conducted Kalachakra. Interpreted as the "abode of immortals" in Pali, Amaravati has the Great Buddhist Stupa and 2000-year-old relics of its Buddhist settlement. Also known as the Mahastupa and *Deepaladinne* (mound of lamps), the 27-metre-high *stupa* is the biggest *stupa* in India. Bavikonda and Thotlakonda monasteries in Visakhapatnam are other Buddhist sites you must visit.



8 CLIMB TO COOLER CLIMES

For those who see Andhra Pradesh as a high-temperature zone, the state's hill stations are an eye-opener. Famous for coffee plantations, views and lush greenery, these places are perfect summer holiday destinations. Begin with Araku Valley and go on to Lambasingi, Horsley Hills, Tirumala, Ananthagiri, Nallamala Hills and Nagari Hills.



REJUVENATE MIND AND SOUL

The clean air, rich biodiversity and stunning views of surrounding hillocks make Horsley Hills a soothing retreat. This charming holiday spot has attractions to keep visitors perpetually engaged. By Deivanai Arunachalam



Looking for a quiet retreat, away from the tiring routine of city life? Head to laid-back Horsley Hills, 1265 metres above sea level, in Madanapalle taluk of Andhra Pradesh's Chittoor district. The charming hill station derives its name from WD Horsley, a British officer in colonial India who made the destination his home. Although tagged as a 'hill station', Horsley Hills can get as sunny as any of India's tropical metros during summer; the nights, however, are windy and cold. In the same strain, Horsley Hills differs from other hill stations in that it doesn't offer holiday staples such as lakes with boating options, waterfalls, churches or astronomical observatories. It is the place to go, if you wish to reconnect with

nature—if you enjoy taking long walks, or appreciate the lemony fragrance of the eucalyptus, or love watching the sunset as twilight trickles down a cluster of clouds. It is an ideal getaway for a solitary writer, an artist looking for picturesque beauty or a bunch of friends to catch up.

CONNECT WITH NATURE

The Andhra Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation's (APTDC) Haritha Hill Resorts, set amid luxuriant tree cover, is a pretty place to stay in Horsley Hills. The Forest Department's Vana Vihar is situated next to the resort. It is a treasure trove of trees that double as a haven for numerous species of birds. It is no wonder then that you wake up to insistent



From top: A view from Horsley Hills; adventure activities outside the Haritha Hill Resort; a deer in Vana Vihar at Horsley Hills.



Clockwise: Yenugumallamma temple; Governor's Bungalow; a saree weaver at work in Madanapalle; Spicy Andhra Chilli Chicken at the Haritha resort in Horsley Hills.

birdsong that reaches a crescendo by 6 am. There are yellow-throated bulbuls, blue-capped rock thrushes, ultramarine fly-catchers, and more for the discerning birdwatcher.

As you enter the forest, there are housed within enclosures little deer, rabbits, peafowl, emus, cockatiels and star tortoises. Besides the mini-zoo, there is a crocodile enclosure, Lake Mansarovar and a nature study centre. The latter has

a library and an auditorium, where one can watch videos on wildlife. Products from the forest such as tamarind, sandalwood, spices, honey, and gum are on display too.

OUTSIDE AND UNPLUGGED

The highlights at Horsley Hills include Gaali Banda, the sunset spot, and Valley View. Both locations are a photographer's delight, especially at dawn and dusk. Other places of interest are



Highview Point, Koundinya Wildlife Sanctuary and Elephant Reserve, the largest banyan tree in the world and the oldest eucalyptus, the Gurramkonda Fort, Governor's Bungalow, and a beautiful temple of Yenugumallamma.



NAVIGATOR

GETTING THERE

Horsley Hills is well-connected by road and is almost equidistant from Tirupati and Bengaluru (140 km). The nearest airport is at Bengaluru, and railhead at Madanapalle. The station has train connectivity with Tirupati, Hyderabad, Chittoor and Guntakal.

WHERE TO STAY

APTDC has 54 rooms/cottages at Horsley Hills, including the Governor's Bungalow. There are two conference halls for work-cum-leisure trips, a spa and a swimming pool. There are restaurants and bars too.

Thrill seekers can enrol for a session with Freakouts—an outfit that has tied up with APTDC and facilitates adventure activity, right outside the resort. It offers high rope games, trampoline, bike riding, and wall climbing. ■



ON A UNIQUE CRAFT TOUR

The quaint city of Madanapalle, near Horsley Hills, is known for its silk brocade sarees. The city has about 20,000 saree weavers. We met with Saralamma, who earns ₹1,200 per saree that she weaves. On average she churns out two sarees a week. "The cost of manufacturing a silk brocade saree is at least ₹6,000. These sarees are then sold for ₹10,000 in showrooms," says Chandrasekar, who owns Bhargava Silk Weavers. The manufacturer and the retailer share the margin, he adds. With over 25 years of experience in the field, Chandrasekar supplies sarees to several showrooms, including those in Venkatagiri and Kanchipuram.

Another famous craft of the region is terracotta pottery. Over 30 terracotta artist families live in Angallu village, 6 kilometres from the city of Madanapalle. The potters create beautiful décor and utility articles such as wind chimes, pots, vases, jugs, fire ovens, lamps and toys. Unsolicited, we step into Reddappa's house, who willingly engages us in a quick demonstration of how he uses the wheel, shapes his clay and fires the products in his backyard.

THE GOD OF ALL THINGS

A VISIT TO TIRUPATI IS AN OPPORTUNITY IN ITSELF—ONE OF THE RARE OCCASIONS WHEN YOU GET TO WITNESS RELIGION, HERITAGE, ART, ARCHITECTURE, NATURE AND LEGENDS. AMONG THE MOST SACRED PLACES FOR HINDUS, TIRUPATI HAS ALL THINGS GRAND, FROM MAGNIFICENT TEMPLES TO EXTRAORDINARY STONES, ALL WITH A STORY. DEIVANAI ARUNACHALAM VISITS THE ABODE OF LORD VENKATESWARA IN TIRUPATI TO ABSORB A BIT OF EVERYTHING.







LORD VENKATESWARA HAS A SOFT CORNER FOR HIS WIFE, GODDESS PADMAVATY.

An ardent devotee knows that his prayer will be answered if he approaches Her first. She deftly handles the case on his behalf—when Padmavaty discusses the request with Venkateswara, He readily grants it. After all, isn't She superior to any of us? The practice, therefore, is to visit the Padmavaty temple at Tiruchanur, five kilometres from Tirupati, before heading for the big meeting with the Lord Himself at Tirumala.

The astonishing Sri Venkateswara temple, a Lord Vishnu shrine, is situated on top of Tirumala Hill, while the town of Tirupati is at the foot. The uphill drive to Tirumala takes about 30 minutes. Adjoining the winding road are forests, home to varied flora and fauna. While covering this beautiful stretch, we witness a graceful deer, followed by a troop of gleeful monkeys. They gambol towards us, arranging themselves as if they are the audience to a curious show by humans in a car. We reach Tirupati, one morning in mid-March, still misty at 8.45 a.m.

The *Brahma Purana* states that Tirupati has an



astounding 66 crore water bodies. Every pond, lake or waterfall can either cure ills, infuse devotion, produce detachment, endow prosperity, or liberate the soul. The most distinguished of them all is the Swami Pushkarini, the pond that lies within the premises of the Sri Venkateswara temple. History abounds with instances when taking a dip in the pond has shorn the devotee of the most complicated problems and heinous sins.

According to legend, Lord Venkateswara was not the first deity to make Tirumala His abode. The chief deity was Varaha—the boar avatar of Lord Vishnu. Since Venkateswara was moving into the residence of Varaha, He granted Varaha the distinction of receiving the devotee first. So, we visit the Varaha shrine, and start for the main temple. The circuitous walk could take about two hours, depending on the crowd.

During Brahmotsavam, the wait in the queue could stretch to 10 hours. The crowd gets tougher to handle as you get closer to the sanctum. Amidst a swirling sea of people, you get a glimpse of the



Clockwise from left: Swami Pushkarini pond; Sri Kalahasti temple; devotees break coconuts at Sri Venkateswara temple; Kapila Teertham; an Andhra thali at Haritha Sri Kalahasti resort.

iconic Lord, for a few seconds, before you emerge, grateful for this rare glimpse.

RELIGION AND BEYOND

Akasha Ganga is a perennial waterfall that lies three kilometres to the north of the main temple. Tirumalai Nambigal, a devotee of the Lord, undertook the arduous trek to the waterfall every day to fetch water for the Lord's *tirumanjanam* (a ritual where holy water is showered over the deity). The practice of using this precious water for the Lord's daily shower continues to this day—the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) laid water lines from the waterfall to the temple when they took over the administration.

A revered water body in Tirupati is Chakra Teertham that has many legends attached to it. Visiting this place is considered as good as touching the Lotus Feet of the Lord, an act that relieves the devotees of their travails. Silathoranam, the unusual geological arch—the only one of its kind in Asia—is nearby.

About 25 feet long and 10 feet tall, this rock is over 2,500 million years old, and formed due to erosion by streams and other natural forces.

Near every prominent temple dedicated to Lord Vishnu exists one dedicated to Shiva. Tirupati is no exception. The gate guardian and mount of Lord Shiva, a majestic bull called Nandi, welcomes you into Kapileswara Swamy temple, at the foot of Tirumala. The main deity, Kapileswara, and Goddess Kamakshi, along with the luminaries of the Hindu pantheon, Lakshmi Narayana, Rukmini, Satyabama, and Venugopalaswamy, bless pilgrims headed for Lord Venkateswara's abode. There is a separate shrine dedicated to Nammazhvar, a supreme devotee of Lord Vishnu.

Kapila Teertham, the holy pond in the temple, receives its inflow during the rainy season from a waterfall in the Seshachalam hills. The steep downhill torrent often brings with it serpents that glide over visitors waiting to have a dip in the waterfall. However, during summer the pond is hardly frightening, and more like a swimming pool, replete with the smell of chlorine.

Tirupati is where every store, establishment, restaurant and tea stall is named after the Lord. It is no wonder, then, that the zoological park housing over a thousand animals is called Sri Venkateswara Zoo. The park has a theme to it—the role of animals in mythology and in the sacred texts is highlighted prominently. The zoo also gives one the option to adopt animals—although not in



*Clockwise from above:
Silathoranam, the unusual
geological arch; the famous
Tirupati laddoo and vada;
lamps at Chakra Teertham
in Tirupati. Facing page:
Chandragiri Fort.*





NAVIGATOR

HOW TO REACH

Tirupati is well-connected to all major cities by air. It is accessible by road and rail; it takes 10 hours by road from Hyderabad and three hours from Chennai to reach the city.

WHERE TO STAY

Comfortable places to stay in at Tirupati include Marasa Sarovar Premiere, Minerva Grand, Keys Vihas, Bhima's Residency and APTDC's Haritha hotels and resorts.

WHAT TO EAT

Being a temple town, it is easy to find restaurants that serve pure vegetarian food as the TTD discourages the intake of non-vegetarian food before entering the temple. Many hotels cater to the non-vegetarian palate too, offering both south and north Indian cuisines.

the literal sense of the word. You can choose to pay for the food and care of an animal of your choice for a fixed period.

Venkateswara Museum is an exciting place to go to if you enjoy history, religion and architecture. Spread over 1.25 lakh sq. ft., the museum is open seven days a week and entry is free.

The Regional Science Centre at Tirupati is an interesting option for science buffs. The centre has a lot to offer and is an ideal field trip destination for school students and adults. There are sections devoted to illusion, technology, popular science and the universe. A planetarium, an auditorium, a science exposition hall and a 3D theatre are other attractions.

TTD offers a package tour of the lesser-known temples in Tirupati. This covers the Govindaraja Swamy temple, the Kodhandarama Swamy temple, the Goddess Padmavaty temple, and the Kalyanavenkateswara temple.

DIVINE FOOD

The Tirupati *laddoo* is a delicacy that's unique to the Lord. The quality and proportion of ingredients—gram flour, sugar, *ghee*, sugar candy, cardamom, cashew and raisins—shape its exclusivity. A staggering 20 tonnes of *laddoos* are produced daily at the huge kitchen near Tirumala. The *laddoo* was

introduced as *naivedyam* (food offered to God) in the temple during the British era. Before this, the *naivedyam* was a sweet made of jaggery and rice, called *atherasam* or *aresu*. Today, the Tirupati *laddoo* is a Geographical Indication, which bestows on the TTD the sole right to produce and distribute the sweet. Tirupati *vada* (made from black *urad* lentils) is another famous divine food offered as *naivedyam* at the temple.

GETAWAYS FROM TIRUPATI

If you get the time to visit other interesting places around Tirupati, visit the Talakona waterfall. About 60 kilometres away, this fall is in full spate between November and January. A popular getaway for adventure seekers, it has steep climbs and slippery slopes. Talakona gushes down a height of 270 feet in a zone declared a biosphere reserve. The reserve also has other waterfalls, including Gujjana and Gundala Kona. Since every waterfall in the region has religious significance, some suggest that sporting activity is best avoided. The other landmarks are Horsley Hills, also called Andhra Ooty, and Chandragiri Fort. The latter is a must-visit for heritage lovers. The 11th century fort has a museum showcasing metal and stone sculptures and a laser show in the evenings. ■



EXQUISITE TALES ON FABRIC

The prime centres of kalamkari art are Sri Kalahasti and Pedana in Machilipatnam. At these creative hubs, artists create magic with their bamboo pens, lively motifs and natural dyes, says **Deivanai Arunachalam**



Flamboyant birds pose with their plumes spread out across six yards of fabric. A proud peacock boasts its resplendent quills on a bedspread. A swan bends down coyly on a stole. A herd of elephants rush across a curtain. The fish decide that a handbag is their safest bet to display their sunray tailfins on. Such has been the transformation in kalamkari design which was restricted to mythological renderings in the days of yore.

The motifs, though, are not the only change kalamkari has seen over the centuries. The age-old, attractive form of art was predominantly practised by men. In recent years, thanks to self-help groups, women have increasingly taken to the art. Making a single kalamkari

work involves as many as 17 stages with the cloth being washed at every stage. You can witness the process in Sri Kalahasti and Machilipatnam (Pedana) in Andhra Pradesh.

DIFFERENCE IN MEANS

While the Sri Kalahasti style involves drawing and filling in the motifs with a pen (*kalam*) made of bamboo, the Machilipatnam style does the exquisite art with blocks. Both the forms use vegetable dyes. A painter takes as long as three months to complete a handmade Kalahasti-style kalamkari fabric. In Machilipatnam, as many as a hundred pieces of similar fabric can be replicated in a day. The Machilipatnam kalamkari

evolved under the Mughals and the sultans of Golconda. Several artists have won national acclaim for their remarkable work on cloth—some of their masterpieces are the tree of life, depictions from Lord Krishna's life and grandiose representations of mythical animals.

The motifs in kalamkari are largely influenced by nature—parrots, peacocks, elephants, swans, creepers and floral designs, except that the Machilipatnam style is more intricate. Kalahasti artists have a greater inclination towards mythological themes and a tendency to embellish their designs with ornate brush strokes. Both the styles have grown adventurous with the palette—while



Clockwise from left: A kalamkari cloth; the bamboo pen used for painting; an artist sketching a character. Facing page, from top: A kalamkari work; wooden-block kalamkari of Pedana in Machilipatnam.

the classic earthy hues can never be replaced, vibrant yellows and pastels have found their place too.

Over a thousand families in Kalahasti are dependent on kalamkari for a living. The community has several success stories that revolve around the financial independence that the art form has bestowed on the women. At the artists' workshop, you see curious liquids bubbling in cauldrons. The cloth is bleached to produce the desired yellowish-white tinge that is conducive to taking on the ink. It is treated again to ensure that the dyes don't smudge in the processes that follow.

Natural dyes are produced from scratch. The cloth is washed in cold water and sun-dried. The design is then inked on the fabric. The motifs

are filled with colours, leaving areas of white that will subsequently be infused with colour when the fabric is boiled in another hue.

JOURNEY OF THE ART

At a time when hand-painted kalamkari was languishing, self-help groups came to the fore. Modern design fused with ancient methods. The traditional panels with mythological drawings soon incorporated contemporary themes. Although kalamkari was traditionally attempted on cotton fabric, today, we see that the artists have begun experimenting with silk, cotton-silk, chiffon and even georgette. Both Sri Kalahasti and Machilipatnam styles of kalamkari have been awarded Geographical Indications, preventing their production in other locations.

Today, a wide variety of kalamkari products, such as sarees, scarves, dupattas, blouses, wall hangings and running fabric, are made. At the Rural Handicrafts Centre at Mittakandriga, three kilometres ahead of Sri Kalahasti on National Highway 47, these products register good sales. A simple kalamkari saree costs about ₹3,000, while an exquisitely designed Tussar silk saree costs as much as ₹14,000; the most expensive kalamkari product is priced at ₹25,000. A grand wall hanging depicting Krishna steering Arjuna's chariot is priced at ₹4,000. "Pilgrims travelling between Tirupati and Kalahasti (famed for its Rahu-Ketu puja) drop by at the centre," says the manager, Madhavi. "Despite limited advertising, the centre has managed to rake in impressive revenues." ■



KALAMKARI MOTIFS ARE INFLUENCED BY NATURE AND RELIGIOUS TEXTS. KALAHASTI ARTISTS HAVE A GREATER INCLINATION TOWARDS MYTHOLOGICAL THEMES AND A TENDENCY TO EMBELLISH THEIR DESIGNS WITH ORNATE BRUSH STROKES.





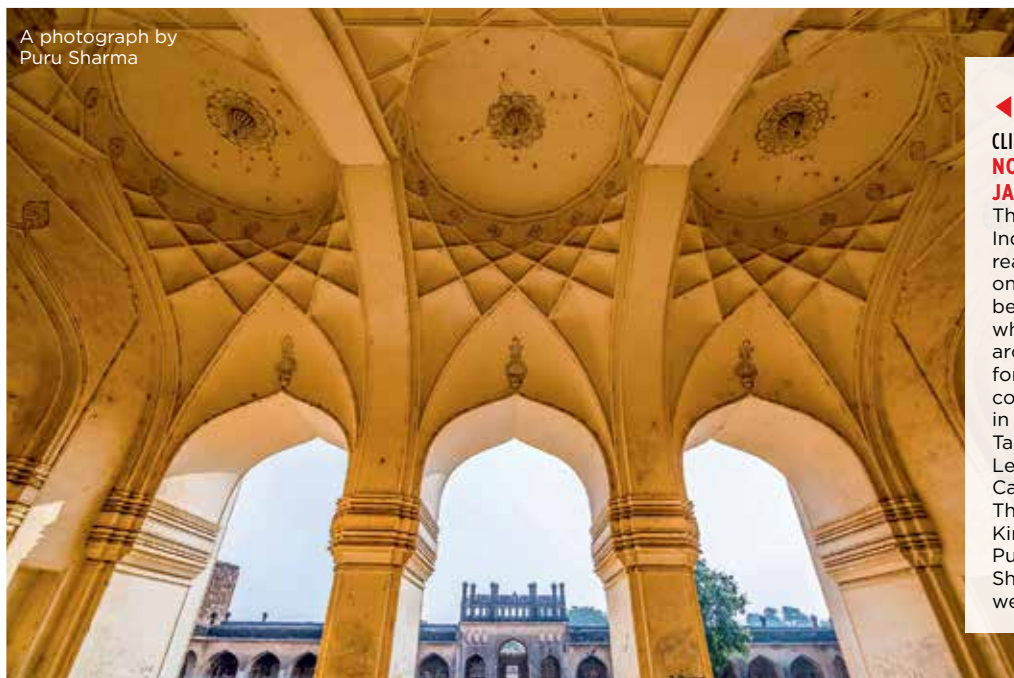
Heritage

LEPAKSHI ANANTAPUR

A charming village historically significant for India, Lepakshi is a trove of fascinating archaeological sites, beautiful ancient temples and rich culture. Founded in AD 1535 by Maharaja Aliya Rama Raya of the Vijayanagara empire, the place is today known for three famous temples and a small hillock shaped like the shell of a tortoise, Kurma Saila. The temples are a magnificent example of timeless art and architecture. Lepakshi's other attractions include a large monolithic idol of Nandi made of granite, wall paintings depicting the scenes from the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, a hanging pillar and Durga Paadam.

NEW COLOURS OF SPRING

History, culture, spirituality and natural beauty led the eclectic mix of events planned by Andhra Pradesh Tourism in the first quarter of 2018. The events not only pulled crowds, but also showcased the state's hidden wealth.



A photograph by
Puru Sharma

CLICK INDIA CONTEST NOVEMBER 2017- JANUARY 2018

The third round of the Click India Photography contest reached its conclusive stage on January 19. The round began on November 3, 2017, when participants from all around the globe registered for the online round of the competition. The live round, in January, covered Tirupati, Talakona, Horsley Hills, Lepakshi, Gandikota, Belum Caves and Srisailem Dam. The winner was Rakesh Kiran from Rajahmundry. Puru Sharma from Agra and Sharad Patil from Kolhapur were the runners-up.

FLAMINGO FESTIVAL JANUARY 7-9

The annual festival rejoices in the arrival of waves of migratory birds to Indian shores to breed, nest and feed, presenting a feast for the eyes of birdwatchers.

For decades, bird enthusiasts and visitors have come to Nelapattu Bird Sanctuary and Pulicat Lake to watch these birds wade and catch food in the shallow lake waters. This annual festival aims to attract tourists from the world over and bring people close to nature.

The festival also had entertainment activities in the evenings.



KEREN SU/GETTYIMAGES



BOAT FESTIVAL, NAGAYALANKA JANUARY 13-14

The month of January is famous for traditional festivals like Sankranthi. On these festive occasions, localities in Andhra Pradesh spend time on various games and sports. One such sport is boat racing. This January, the Andhra Pradesh Tourism Authority organised a two-day boat competition on the River Krishna at Nagayalanka. The participants came from different places. Each day ended with colourful performances.



GANDIKOTA UTSAVU, KADAPA JANUARY 21-23

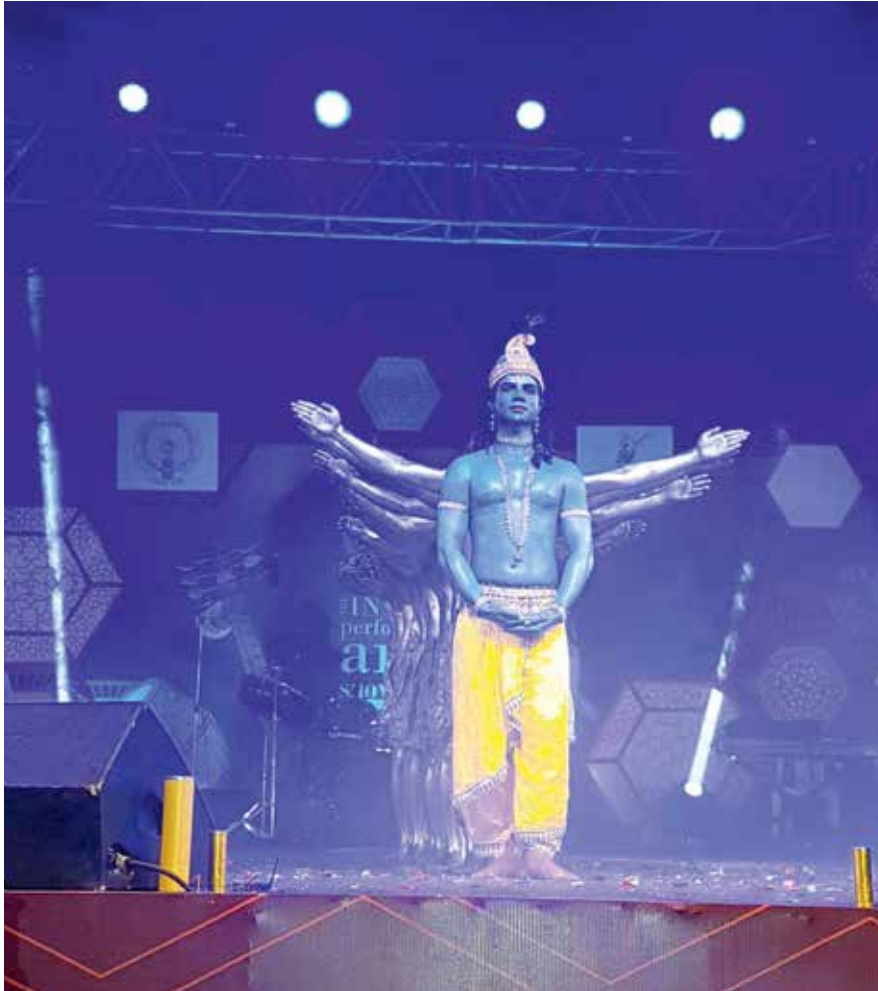
The hidden Grand Canyon of India, Gandikota is a village on the right bank of the River Pennar. The place, with a huge fort, stunning gorge, lakes, temples, beautiful landscape and wild forests, is endowed with vast natural resources, and is a sight to behold. Every year, the Government of Andhra Pradesh with Andhra Pradesh Tourism Authority organises Gandikota Utsavalu at the fort. The festival brings extravagant entertainment to the people, and spreads awareness about the fort and its rich history.



▲ **GLOBAL SHANTI, BUDDHIST HERITAGE FESTIVAL, AMARAVATI FEBRUARY 3-5**
Amaravati, the capital of Andhra Pradesh, turned into a perfect platform to pray for world peace during this spiritual event. The festival was organised to highlight the city's links to Buddhism. The three-day festival had spiritual sermons, insightful discussions and cultural programmes. It began on a colourful and devotional note, as a large number of Buddhist monks converged on the city. There was a collective chant led by senior monks, and a peace rally with about 1,000 monks. The event was livestreamed, inviting people to connect, and showcased fascinating aspects of Buddhist heritage.

▶ **DHOOL RURAL SPORTS, KURNOOL | FEBRUARY 23-25**
An interesting event and a new initiative taken by the state government, Dhoor Rural Sports celebrated many traditional sports played in Indian villages. Around 1,500 sportspersons from all over Andhra Pradesh participated in the event that had races, games of volleyball, basketball, kabaddi and kho-kho, and a bullock cart race. Cultural programmes were organised in the evenings with artists such as Bhavana, Kamna Jethmalani, Vishnu Priya and Archana Shastry presenting mesmerising performances.





INDIAN PERFORMING ART SHOW, KURNOOL | MARCH 3-5

Performance art is a genre that enriches the faith of the people in their heritage and sustained ancient traditions. To preserve this genre, Andhra Pradesh Tourism Authority organised a two-day event, the Indian Performing Art Show, in Kurnool. Artistes from different parts of India presented unique shows for the audience. The objective was to promote a variety of performing arts, local and national talent. The festival featured Sivamani, nationally renowned sitarist Ravi Chary and popular Bollywood music composer and singer Sangeet Haldipur. The folk performance group from Odisha, Sambalpuri and *India's Got Talent* fame, Prince Dance Group also performed at the festival.

WORLD SPIRITUAL FESTIVAL, TIRUPATI | MARCH 23-25

During the three-day festival, yoga and meditation programmes were organised from 7 to 8.30 am at Shilparamam, while programmes like spiritual discourses, classical dance, music and song shows were held in the evening at Tarakarama Stadium. The performers included Voddiparthi Padmakar, G. Balakrishna Prasad, Sivamani, Kondaveeti Jyothirmmai, Medasani Mohan and others. Art of Living founder Sri Sri Ravi Shankar conducted Maha Satsang on the second day at Tarakarama Stadium. Lectures on several topics were also held at Mahati auditorium along with a panel discussion. From this year, the festival has been made an annual event.





VIZAG YACHTING FESTIVAL, VISAKHAPATNAM | MARCH 28-31

A first-of-its-kind yachting festival held in Visakhapatnam in late March saw some fantastic sailing in the Bay of Bengal in luxury yachts, coupled with gala dinners and enthralling performances. The event was organised to position Vizag as a yachting destination.

A perfect blend of lifestyle, water sports and adventure, the extravaganza saw a fleet of nine luxurious sea-faring beauties assemble in Vizag from various parts of India and abroad. Each yacht had one or more cabins that could be rented for a day out sailing at sea by groups of families and friends. The yachts sailed through popular spots such as Rushikonda Beach, RK Beach, Tothlakonda and Yarada Beach. The guests onboard were kept engaged by swimming, kayaking, fishing and other activities. The gala dinners in the evening were complemented by riveting performances by popular Indian bands such as Indian Ocean and Parikrama, and other upcoming talents like A26 and Gaurav Dagaonkar.

—Satarupa Paul





**LEPAKSHI FESTIVAL,
ANANTAPUR | MARCH 31-APRIL 1**

This two-day annual festival organised by the Government of Andhra Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh Tourism Authority celebrated the culture and heritage of Lepakshi. The historic town, located on the Karnataka–Andhra Pradesh border in Hindupur taluk of Anantapur district, is culturally and archaeologically significant. It has eminent shrines dedicated to Lord Shiva, Lord Vishnu and Lord Veerabhadra built during the Vijayanagara Empire. The festival had performances by famous artists such as percussionist Sivamani. This year, about 600 dancers performed Mahakuchipudi. Shobha Yatra—a procession with a horse-drawn carriage—was another important event. A heritage walk was also organised during the festival. Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu inaugurated the festival and flagged off the Shobha Yatra. Hindupur MLA and actor Nandamuri Balakrishna, dressed as Sri Krishnadevarayulu, was seated on the horse-drawn carriage. Irrigation Minister Devineni Umamaheswara Rao, Information Minister Kaluva Srinivasulu, Women Welfare Minister Paritala Sunitha, Excise Minister K.S. Jawahar, Chief Whip in the Assembly Palle Raghunatha Reddy, Chief Whip in the Legislative Council Payyavula Keshav, Government Whip Yamini Bala, District Collector G. Veerapandian, and MLCs and MLAs were also present on the occasion.





*From left:
A business
meeting in
progress; the
boardroom
at Novotel
Visakhapatnam
Varun Beach.*



OFFICIAL MATTERS

Andhra Pradesh has chic hotels that are equipped with modern facilities to take your business to new heights.

VISAKHAPATNAM

Vizag, with two ports, an international airport and a well laid-out railway network, is the largest commercial hub of Sunrise Andhra Pradesh. Heralded as the 'city of the future', it has the potential to become a complete finance, business, cinema and tourism hotspot. Realising this potential, many hotel companies have set up properties that cater to business travellers.

Novotel Visakhapatnam Varun Beach, The Park, Four Points by Sheraton, the Gateway Hotel Beach Hotel, Welcomhotel Grand Bay, and Sunray Village Resort have luxuriously done-up properties with modern facilities for a smooth day of work. These hotels are well-located, have plush rooms and suites with ergonomic work areas and internet access, and

big conference rooms. You may go to their restaurants for meetings over delectable food. Stay at The Park for its modern facilities and attractions like a jogging track, a tennis court, an outdoor chessboard and a luxury spa.

You can begin your day at the East Point Golf Club, Mudasarlova, or go for a walk on the serene beaches with golden sands. Perfect for an offsite, Haritha Valley Resort, Araku, has a conference hall, a swimming pool, gym, indoor game facilities and a restaurant. Go for advance booking, as it is one of the best-selling resorts of Andhra Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation (APTDC).

VIJAYAWADA

Located near the state capital of Amaravati, Vijayawada is an important

centre of state administration and political action in Andhra Pradesh. The city has a range of commercial hotels, homestays, and APTDC resorts to serve all sections of business travellers.

The Gateway Hotel on MG Road has 108 luxe rooms and a conference room. High-speed internet and wi-fi are available throughout the hotel. The Metropolitan, a budget hotel, also offers free internet access, and breakfast service to its patrons. APTDC's resorts, Berm Park and Bhavani Island, have dedicated conference halls, restaurants and bars, in addition to a boating facility for you to unwind after an action-packed day.

KAKINADA

The district headquarters of East Godavari, Kakinada is another

Clockwise: Food at Marasa Sarovar Premiere; the outdoor chess board at The Park, Visakhapatnam; the gym at Minerva Grand Tirupati; The Gateway Hotel, Tirupati; The Gateway Hotel, Visakhapatnam.



important centre of Andhra Pradesh. It has modern hotels close to the central business district that cater to upscale business and leisure travellers.

GRT Kakinada has five room categories suited to each traveller's needs, two dining outlets, two banquet halls, a fully equipped gym, outdoor pool on level four, and a spa.

Paradigm Sarovar Portico, an eight-minute walk from Kakinada Port railway station and 15 kilometres from the beautiful birds and mangroves of Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary, has rooms with free wi-fi, flat-screen TVs and safes, minibars and tea and coffeemaking facilities. There are plush suites with facilities that will ensure you are well taken care of to crack that all-important business deal.

The prime APTDC resort in the area, Haritha Beach Resort, Kakinada,

has a conference hall to accommodate 30 people and a restaurant.

TIRUPATI

The temple city brings Chittoor the distinction of drawing the maximum tourist footfalls in Andhra Pradesh. Tirupati is where tourism meets business, and so has hotels that serve both needs. A laid-back modern hotel, Fortune Select Grand Ridge is 27 kilometres from the Lord Venkateswara Temple. Offering views of the countryside and mountains, it has contemporary rooms with free wi-fi, safes, and minibars. There's a vegetarian restaurant, a coffee shop and a bar, in addition to an exercise room, an outdoor pool and a spa with a sauna.

Marasa Sarovar Premiere has 121 aesthetically designed rooms that pamper you with a host of services.

A meal in its central open courtyard with the lotus restaurant will help you cool off after a hectic day at the business centre. Another centrally located business hotel in the temple city is Minerva Grand Tirupati.

APTDC's Haritha Hotel at Sri Kalahasti also hosts business travellers. It has a restaurant and a conference hall, and room facilities to make sure you're prepped for meetings. The Haritha Hill Resort at Horsley Hills has a conference hall, a swimming pool, a restaurant and a bar. It is probably one of the few government properties in the country that offers accommodation which gives the private sector a run for its money. ■

—Jyoti Verma





ALL-TIME FAVOURITES

Tour packages to Tirupati are popular throughout the year. From one-day local tours to trips from other Indian states, there is something for everyone. Here are a few packages from APTDC and others for you to choose from.

LOCAL TEMPLE TOURS

1-Day TOUR The Tirupati Temple Tour of Andhra Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation (APTDC) covers Tiruchanur, Thondavada, Srinivas Mangapuram, Kapila Theertham and Govindarajaswamy temples. There are six trips a day of four hours each. The tour begins from Sreenivasam at 6 a.m. and goes on till 12.30 p.m. A tour is priced at ₹100. An outstation tour, with two trips daily in the morning, begins and ends at Sreenivasam. It covers seven temples—Sri Venugopala Swamyvari, Sri Vedanarayana Swamy, Sri Kalyana Venkateswara Swamy, Sri Prasanna Venkateswara Swamy, Sri Karya Manikya Swamy, Sri Annapurna Sametha Kasi Visweswara Swamy, and Sri Palli Kondeswara Swamy. The tariff of the package is ₹250. aptdc.gov.in

TOURS FROM TAMIL NADU

3-Day TOUR The tour from Coimbatore to Tirumala, in a Volvo coach, covers Tirumala, Tiruchanur and Sri Kalahasti. The coach leaves at 8 p.m. from Chennai and reaches Tirumala at 7 a.m. The package, with non-air-conditioned accommodation, is priced at ₹2,450 for an adult and ₹2,150 for a child. A tour from Madurai that covers the same places in an air-conditioned coach departs

at 6 p.m. and arrives in Tirumala at 7 a.m. The cost of the package is ₹2,450 for an adult and ₹2,150 for a child. There is a daily, three-day Kumbakonam-Tirumala tour, in an air-conditioned coach, that covers Tirupati, Tirumala and Tiruchanur. It begins from Kumbakonam at 6 p.m. The coach arrives in Tirumala at 6 a.m. The cost of the package is ₹2,400 for an adult and ₹2,100 for a child.

Another daily APTDC tour to Tirumala in an air-conditioned coach with Seegra Darshan and stay begins at 7 p.m. in Chennai and ends at 7 p.m. the next day in Chennai. The fare is ₹1,200 for an adult and ₹900 for a child. Another daily tour is in a Volvo air-conditioned coach with Seegra Darshan, beginning at 5 a.m. in Chennai and concluding at 10 p.m. This is priced at ₹1,400 for an adult and ₹1,100 for a child. aptdc.gov.in

TOURS FROM KARNATAKA

1-Day TOUR The daily tour from Bengaluru to Tirumala covers Tirumala and Tiruchanur, and begins at 9 p.m. and ends at 7 p.m. the next day. It includes non-air-conditioned accommodation, Seegra Darshan, and an air-conditioned coach. The tour from Sunday to Thursday costs ₹1,800 for adults and ₹1,500 for a child. The rate on Fridays and Saturdays is ₹2,225 and ₹1,925, respectively.



**MARASA SAROVAR
PREMIERE
₹14,499
LEISURE PACKAGE**

**2-Day
TOUR**

The daily tour covers Tirumala and Tiruchanur. It begins at 9 p.m. and culminates at 7 p.m. the next day. It includes non-air-conditioned stay, Seegra Darshan, and an air-conditioned coach. On Sundays to Thursdays, it costs ₹1,800 for adults and ₹1,500 for children. On Fridays and Saturdays, the rates are ₹2,225 and ₹1,925, respectively.

MARASA SAROVAR PREMIERE, TIRUPATI

**2-Night
TOUR**

The Leisure Package of the hotel is for ₹14,499 (single/double occupancy). It includes breakfast and dinner at Lotus Café, airport transfer from/to Renigunta or to railway station, half-day tour to Padmavaty and Apalagunta temples, a welcome drink, 20 percent discount on food and soft beverages, 15 percent discount at the spa and all applicable taxes. The package is till June 30, 2018. sarovarhotels.com ■

Contact Andhra Pradesh Tourism at aptourism.gov.in, aptdc.gov.in, 180042545454 (toll free number)



**APTDC RESORT
₹2,450
MADURAI-TIRUMALA**



Facing page: The road journey to Tirumala.
Clockwise: Marasa Sarovar Premiere, Tirupati; the idol of Lord Venkateswara; Haritha Resort, Sri Kalahasti.

SUMMER PACKAGES FOR PILGRIMS

Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation Limited is running Bharat Darshan tour packages for pilgrims these summer holidays. The special tours, Nava Jyotirlinga (12 days), Ganga Yamuna (12 days) and Dakshina Bharat (nine days) *yatras*, will run between April 3 and May 4. Among the many religious places covered are Andhra Pradesh's Tirupati and Sri Kalahasti temples. Devotees will be provided accommodation on multi-sharing basis, refreshments, breakfast, lunch, dinner, water, a tour escort and complete security on the train. The packages, in sleeper class and AC coach, are from ₹8,505 to ₹15,540. irctctourism.com.



THE FLAVOURS OF ANDHRA

Take home the taste of Andhra Pradesh, as we bring you the recipes of its famous dishes. Passed down generations, these delicacies are part of the state's glorious culinary heritage.

▶ ALLAM PESARATTU



APPETISER | GREEN DOSA

- Soak whole green gram (250 gm) with rice (50 gm) for a night. In the morning drain the water. Grind ginger (20 gm), green chillies (30 gm) and cumin seeds (5 gm), add green gram, and grind to a coarse batter.
- Add salt and mix well.
- Heat a *tawa* and spread the batter and add oil. Sprinkle chopped onions and coriander on the spread.
- Cook till golden brown on one side.
- Serve with ginger chutney.

▶ CHINTA CHIGURU PAPPU



PULSES | DAL WITH TENDER TAMARIND LEAVES

- Clean and wash *chinta chiguru*/tender tamarind leaves (50 gm) without stems and keep it aside. Pressure cook dal (150 gm) with green chillies (10 gm) and turmeric until done.
- Now sprinkle tamarind leaves after crushing them with both palms.
- Cook nicely.
- Heat oil in a pan. Add mustard, cumin, red chillies, curry leaves, green chilli, turmeric and let it crackle.
- Add to the cooked *dal* with salt. Mix well.
- Garnish with chopped coriander and peanuts. Serve hot with rice or chapatti.

▶ GUTTI VANKAYA KURA



MAIN COURSE DISH | STUFFED BRINJAL

- Slit the brinjal (500 gm) from the base and two sides and keep in salted water for a few minutes. Slice onions (250 gm) and slit green chillies (10 gm).
- Heat oil in a pan. Add cumin seeds (10 gm), whole red chillies (10 gm), slit green chillies and onions, and sauté till they acquire a raw flavour. Grind and keep it aside.
- Roughly crush half the roasted peanuts and add them to the ground mixture of onions.
- Check for salt, and stuff this onion mixture into the brinjal.
- Heat oil in a pan, and place the stuffed brinjals and cover with a tight lid.
- Cook on a low flame. Once cooked, garnish with chopped coriander and peanuts. Serve hot with rice or chapatti.





► BONGU BIRYANI



CEREALS | BAMBOO CHICKEN BIRYANI

- Take a mixing bowl and marinate boneless chicken pieces (500 gm) with ginger-garlic paste (10 gm), chilli powder (10 gm), salt, curd (100 gm), coarsely ground cinnamon (5 gm) and *shah jeera* (5 gm).
- Boil 2 litres of water, add 10 gm of ginger-garlic paste, mint leaves (10 gm) and salt.
- Add rice (500 gm) and cook till half-done. Drain the water.
- Sprinkle cardamom powder (5 gm), some *ghee* (50 ml) and lemon juice (25 ml).
- Take freshly cut, large green bamboo that is closed from one end. Fill bamboo with two spoons of rice and add half of the marinated chicken and half of parboiled rice.
- Similarly, cover the chicken and rice in the second part. Close the other end with wheat dough. Cook it on live charcoal till it is done.
- Leave it for another 15 minutes. Open and serve.

► BEERAKAYA ROYYALA KOORA



NON-VEGETARIAN | RIDGE GOURD AND PRAWN CURRY

- Wash and clean prawns (250 gm). Chop onions (100 gm), tomatoes (50 gm) and green chillies (5 gm).
- Heat 50 ml oil in a pan, sear prawns and keep aside.
- In the same pan, cook the onions till translucent, add curry leaves (5 gm), green chillies, and ginger-garlic paste (10 gm).
- Add turmeric and ridge gourd (250 gm). Cook on slow flame.
- Add tomatoes (50 gm) to the pan. Cook till they are soft, add chilli powder according to taste, *garam masala* (2 gm) and seared prawns.
- Leave for another 15 minutes. Open and serve.



► RAGI MUDDA



CEREALS | RAGI MILLET BALLS

- Wash the rice (250 gm) and cook till completely done.
- Mix some water into the *ragi* flour (100 gm) and pour the mixture into the cooked rice.
- Mix well and add some salt. Cover and cook for some time.
- Remove and let it rest for some time. Smear *ghee* onto your palms and shape the mixture into tennis-ball spheres. Serve with hot thin non-vegetarian gravy or *dal*.

► TATI BELLAM UKKRI

DESSERT | PALM JAGGERY RICE PUDDING

- Soak rice (250 gm) for two hours and make a smooth batter.
- Boil palm jaggery (500 gm) and water, and prepare syrup in the pan.
- Add the smooth rice batter to hot syrup, cook it on a slow flame till the mixture becomes thick.
- Add *ghee* (100 ml) to the mixture and mix well till it releases the sides of the pan. Transfer the mixture from hot pan to a grease-proof tray.
- Set it for 10-12 minutes and cut into desired shapes.



The recipes have been taken from *Recipes from Andhra Pradesh Made Healthy & Delicious for You* by Andhra Pradesh Tourism Authority.



From right: Vijayawada is home to upmarket stores like Raavee Couture, a multi-designer outlet; clothes on sale in a retail store on Besant Road.



RETAIL THERAPY

Vijayawada has many malls, bustling markets and local shopping areas offering the best of ethnic and contemporary ware.

By Shibani Bawa

Vijayawada may be a small city, yet will not disappoint shopaholics. There is literally something for everyone. On one hand you have swanky malls stocked up with a few international brands, on the other, there are old shopping streets where you can purchase handicrafts, handloom sarees, pearls, silver jewellery and semi-precious stones as well. Although there is a range of products that you can buy, the city is best known for Andhra Pradesh's heritage items. Here's our shopping guide to get you to the right stores and pick the best.



STREET N SMART

SHOPPING STREET AT BESANT ROAD

If you happen to be in Vijayawada, shopping at Besant Road is a must at least once. Although it is a busy trade centre, tourists also frequently visit this area. Being one of the oldest shopping streets in the city, it rightfully reflects an old-world charm since some of the shops have been around for more than 80 years. The area is a tad congested but makes for a fun experience with an array of cloth stores, gold shops, and those selling accessories and other knickknacks that can keep you busy for hours. You can try your bargaining skills on pushcart sellers offering bangles and trinkets. Bakeries and restaurants serving western, as well as delicious local cuisine, make for ideal pitstops while you're on a shopping spree. A dynamic place, this is where you can be a part of city's hustle and bustle.

A GOOD MIX AT BANDAR ROAD

Bandar Road is the business hub of the city and home to sprawling malls and clothes shops. With options such as Shoppers Stop, Lifestyle and Aishwarya Silks one can splurge on a comprehensive range of brands and products such as ethnic apparel, western outfits, designer wear, perfumes and accessories.

HIGH-END BOUTIQUES AT M.G. ROAD

Mahatma Gandhi Road, popularly known as M.G. Road, is one of the most prime areas of Vijayawada. The best malls, showrooms of major brands and local designers of the city are located here. Besides western wear, it is a great place for buying ethnic clothes. Head to TBZ for an upmarket jewellery shopping experience or to Raavee Couture for designer wear. M.G. Road is also a good

place to buy handicraft items made of stone, silver, marble, wood and metal. Shoppers interested in art can check out the Kalamkari paintings that depict mythological eras with creations of Hindu Gods and Goddesses.

SWANKY MALLS

There are three major malls in Vijayawada. PVP Square Mall is the biggest and considered to be the best shopping mall in the city. Here you can literally buy anything you want from jewellery to apparel, accessories to household goods. Besides some multi-national stores, the major attraction to Ripples Mall is the PVR multiplex where you can catch the latest movies. Finally, Trendset Mall has been the talk of the town with four levels of shopping, a food court and an entertainment zone with a range of games for children.

MUST DO, MUST TRY

Located in the Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh, Vijayawada has always been a prominent commercial centre of the state. The district has seven handicraft clusters known for producing the



best of kalamkari paintings, imitation jewellery, musical instruments, Kondapalli toys and papier-mâché. Vijayawada is a big market for not just these products, but also those from clusters outside the district. When you are done exploring the shopping streets and malls for these products and more, do try the popular local delight, *biryani* and other authentic Andhra delicacies like *laddoo* made from coconut, roasted *urad dal* and

jaggery, *pachadi* (an Andhra-style chutney that goes really well with *idli* and *dosa*), and seafood curries. The spiciest of all South Indian cuisines, Andhra cuisine makes ample use of green chillies, tamarind, tomatoes and curry leaves, so you are sure to have a memorable gastronomic experience. Before leaving, pick powdered spices like *sambhar* and *rasam* to create authentic flavours when cooking Andhra cuisine at home. ■

Clockwise from top left: Colourful bangles on sale; a busy store in Vijayawada; Kondapalli toys.



SOUVENIRS

■ Kalamkari is a traditional art form that involves vegetable dyed block-printing of a fabric. Since it is produced at the nearby town of Pedana in Krishna district, it makes for a wonderful souvenir to buy.

■ Mangalagiri sarees, which are local to Andhra should be on the top of your shopping list. These sarees are handwoven in Mangalagiri, a town in Guntur district, near Vijayawada. Take your pick from fine cotton or soft silks that are guaranteed to look elegant on any occasion.

■ *Avakkai* has to be the one

food item in your shopping bag, as it contains the essence of the delicious cuisine of Andhra Pradesh. Any meal in the state is not complete without this delicious mango pickle. Its spicy and tangy flavour will leave you licking your fingers.

■ Kondapalli toys are one of the most famous symbols of Vijayawada. These handcrafted toys are made in a village of the same name, around 25 km from the city. A trip to the village is recommended to witness the process of carving and painting these beautiful toys.



EXPLORE THE TEMPLE CITY

Special outstation offers to Tirumala from tour operators

MANGALORE-TIRUMALA

TOUR: The Andhra Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation (APTDC) tour is available every Monday and Friday by non-air-conditioned coach and ₹300 *darshan* ticket. The two-day tour covers Tirupati, Tirumala and Tiruchanur. It includes non-air-conditioned accommodation and Seegra Darshan, and is priced ₹2,350 for an adult and ₹2,050 for a child. aptdc.gov.in

KARUR-TIRUMALA TOUR:

The air-conditioned coach, two-day tour covers Tirumala, Tiruchanur and Srikalahasti. It begins at 7 p.m. from Karur and reaches Tirumala at 6 a.m. The package is priced at

₹2,200 for an adult and ₹1,900 for a child. aptdc.gov.in

BENGALURU-TIRUMALA DARSHAN PACKAGE:

The package includes the pick-up and drop at a predominant place near to your location in Bengaluru, food, accommodation, special *darshan* ticket of ₹300 per person, personal guidance to

all significant spots in Tirupati, and guidance for tonsure. It begins every night at 9 p.m. in an air-conditioned Volvo bus and reaches Tirupati by 4 a.m. where customers are provided a room in Seven Hills hotels to relax before the *darshan*. The temples covered are Sri Padmavathi Ammavari and Lord Balaji. After *darshan*, lunch is provided. The package costs ₹1,900 for adults from Sunday to Thursday. During weekends, the rate is ₹2,050 for adults. There is a charge of ₹150 for special food arrangements for breakfast and lunch. Children below three years can have free travel without seat. balajitourpackage.com ■



LONG HAUL

BOOK NOW

Tirupati Flight Package Ex-Delhi (via Chennai)

This IRCTC tour of two nights and three days begins from Tirupati by air on April 14, April 21 and May 19, 2018. The package includes two breakfasts and dinners each. The accommodation is at Fortune Kences or Keys Vihar or any equivalent hotel. The rate for single occupancy is ₹20,300 and for double occupancy is ₹16,400. irctctourism.com

TIRUPATI IS CRUISING AHEAD ON THE PATH TO BECOMING A SMART CITY. IN COMPARISON TO 100 SMART CITY PROJECTS IN THE COUNTRY, THE TEMPLE CITY HAS TOPPED IN EXECUTION, GROUNDED AND COMPLETED PROJECTS.

INSIDER TAKE

Great recommendations from locals to give your itinerary a leading edge.



KARNAM MALLESWARI
OLYMPIC MEDALLIST,
RAJIV GANDHI KHEL RATNA, WEIGHTLIFTER

For someone planning a visit to Andhra Pradesh, my recommendation would be the port city of Vizag. The place has so much to offer—beautiful beaches, famous temples, ancient Buddhist sites and a scenic valley. There's a distinct freshness in the air with tourists thronging the beach and chasing waves, and children enjoying camel rides. One should not miss the delicious breakfast of typical Andhra-style *dosa*. Sample the seafood, curries, and *muri* mixture and *aratikaya bajji* at Vizag's beaches. There's so much you can do in this buzzing city.



YAMINI KRISHNAMURTHY
PADMA BHUSHAN, BHARATANATYAM
AND KUCHIPUDI DANCER

As an ardent lover of Indian classical dance, my favourite place in Andhra Pradesh is Kuchipudi. It's a small heritage village in Krishna district where almost every household has a Kuchipudi artiste. My first visit to this culturally rich place was when I was a young girl. It was a truly inspirational experience, and gave me a sense of belongingness. So, be it for the love of classical dance or music or even otherwise, I think you should visit this quaint village. Book accommodation at Vijayawada as the village does not have many stay options.

—As told to Deepika Khurana

Andhra Pradesh TOURISM

Secretary

Tourism & Culture, Government of Andhra Pradesh,
A P Secretariat Velagapudi, Amaravathi, Andhra Pradesh

Toll Free: 1800-42-545454;

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