

Around Goa

It's easy to forget that Goa is part of a far, far bigger country, but there are several interesting and highly worthwhile excursions, no more than a day's journey across the border into Karnataka, one of India's most interesting states.

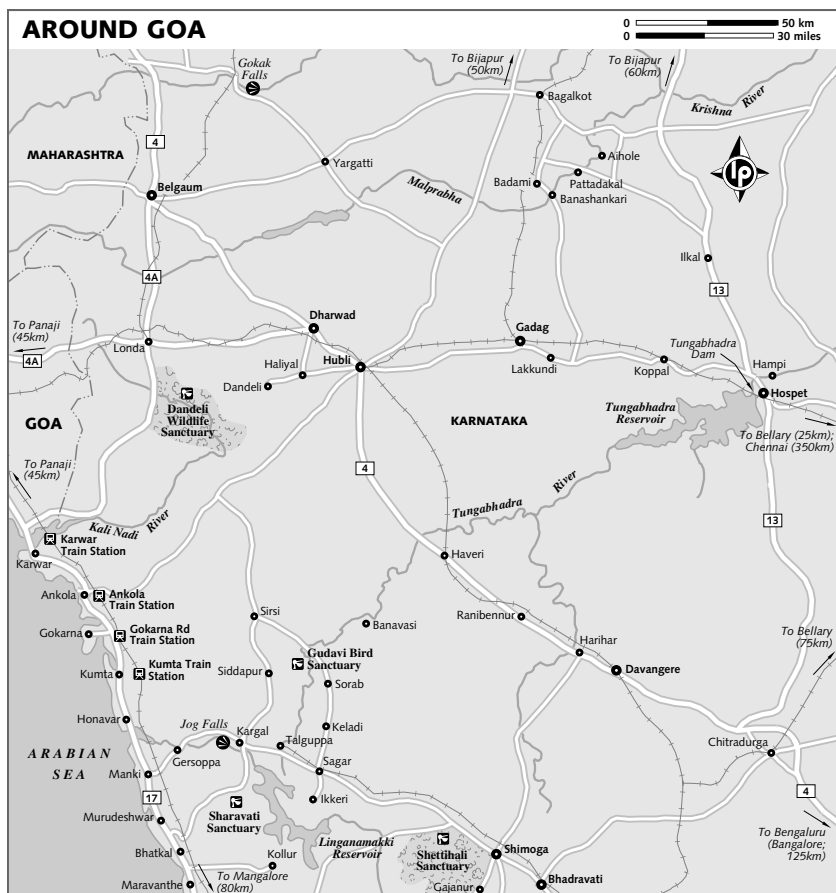
Gokarna is situated about 60km south of the Goan border in northern Karnataka. The village itself is one of the most holy Hindu sites in South India, but it's the beautiful beaches that have drawn travellers over the years – many of them ex-Goa hippies escaping the hype, or new adventurers who've heard the rumours.

About 50km southeast of Gokarna are Jog Falls, the highest in India. The flow of the falls is not as grand as it once was, but an exploration of the surrounding countryside still makes for a worthy excursion. The ultimate journey from Goa, however, is to Hampi, the magnificent ruined city of the Vijayanagar empire and a renowned travellers' centre. Its Virupaksha Temple stands proudly at almost 50m, and is one of the earliest structures in this evocatively historical area. Hampi's Vittala Temple, with its magnificent sculpture and alluring 'musical' pillars, is unlike anything you'll see in Goa, and will likely form one of your most distinct memories of a visit here, long after you've returned home.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Trek the spectacular countryside around India's highest waterfall, **Jog Falls** (p216)
- Mingle with pilgrims, escapists and other assorted arrivals among the temples and beaches of **Gokarna** (opposite)
- Chat with Lakshmi, the temple elephant, in the thick of **Hampi Bazaar** (p218)
- Explore the extraordinary World Heritage-rated remains at Hampi's **Vittala Temple** (p218)





GOKARNA

☎ 08386

A quaint and low-key settlement on the Arabian Sea, Gokarna is where hordes of Hindu pilgrims gather throughout the year to pay their respects in the ancient temples. During major Hindu festivals (see p22) the village is at its dramatic best, and while the main village is definitely temple, rather than tanning, orientated, a few out-of-town beaches provide an ideal opportunity for some carefree beachside lazing.

Information

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

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

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

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

Sights & Activities

TEMPLES

Non-Hindus are not allowed inside Gokarna's temples. However, there are plenty of colourful rituals to be witnessed around town. At the western end of Car St is the **Mahabaleshwara Temple**, home to a revered lingam (phallic representation of Shiva). Nearby is the **Ganapati Temple**, while at the other end of the street is the **Venkataraman Temple**. About 100m further

south is **Koorti Teertha**, the large temple tank (reservoir) where locals, pilgrims and immaculately dressed Brahmins perform their ablutions next to washerwomen on the temple ghats (steps or landings).

BEACHES

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

A 20-minute hike on the path brings you to the top of a barren headland with expansive sea views. On the southern side is **Kudle** (kood-lay) **Beach**, the first of Gokarna's pristine beaches. Basic snacks, drinks and accommodation are available here.

South of Kudle Beach, a track climbs over the next headland, and a further 20-minute walk brings you to **Om Beach**, with a handful of chai shops and shacks. South of Om Beach lie the more isolated **Half-Moon Beach** and **Paradise Beach**, which come to life in season, between

November and March. They are a 30-minute and one-hour walk, respectively.

Depending on demand, fishing boats can ferry you from Gokarna Beach to Kudle (Rs100) and Om (Rs200). An auto-rickshaw from town to Om Beach costs around Rs150.

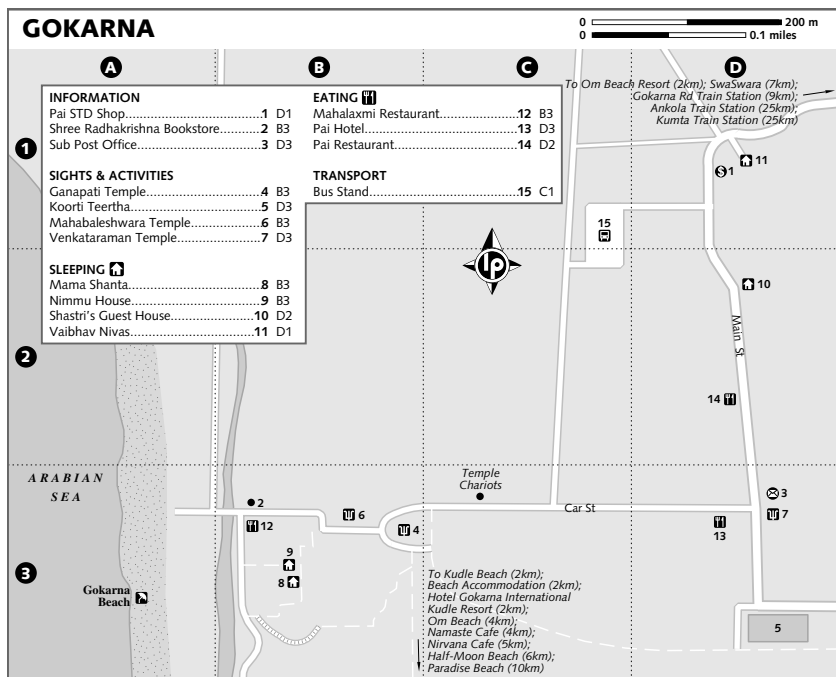
Don't walk around after dark, or alone at any time – it's easy to slip on the paths or get lost, and muggings have occurred. For a small fee, most lodges in Gokarna will safely store valuables and baggage while you chill out in the beach huts.

AYURVEDA

Quality ayurvedic therapies and packages are available at specialist ayurvedic centres in SwaSwara (opposite) and Om Beach Resort (opposite).

Sleeping

With a few exceptions, the choice here is between rudimentary beach-hut accommodation, or a basic but more comfortable room in town. Some hotels in town cater to pilgrims, and may come with certain attendant rules and



regulations. Prices quoted here may increase depending on local pilgrimage demand.

BEACHES

Both Kudle and Om Beaches have several shacks offering budget huts and rooms – shop around. Places also open up on Half-Moon and Paradise beaches from November to March. Most places provide at least a bed roll, but bring your own sheets or sleeping bag if you're fussy. Padlocks are provided and huts are secure. Communal washing and toilet facilities are simple.

Namaste Cafe (☎ 257141; Om Beach; s without bathroom Rs150, deluxe hut Rs600) In and out of season, Namaste is the place to hang. Its restaurant-bar cooks up great bites and is the premier Om chill-out spot. In season it also offers basic huts (Rs50) at Paradise Beach and cottages at Namaste Farm (from Rs400) on the headland.

Nirvana Cafe (☎ 329851; Om Beach; s without bathroom Rs250, cottage Rs600) Located on the southern end of Om Beach is this pleasant option, with a handful of cute and rustic cottages with little sit-outs, nestled amid shady palms and groves.

Hotel Gokarna International Kudle Resort (☎ 257843; Kudle Beach; d with/without AC Rs1500/1200; ♻️) Run by the same management that owns Hotel Gokarna International in town, this midrange option has smart rooms and a lovely garden out the front overlooking the sea. The waves wash up to its gates during high tide!

Swaswara (☎ 257132, 04842668221; www.swaswara.com; Om Beach; d 7 nights Indian/foreigner Rs120,000/US\$2300; ♻️ 📺 📺) No short stays on offer here, but you can chill out at this elegant and superbly designed red laterite resort for a full week, and enjoy a holiday based around yoga and ayurvedic treatments. Rates include full board, transport, leisure activities and daily yoga sessions. Weeklong ayurvedic treatment packages kick off at around US\$570.

GOKARNA

Vaibhav Nivas (☎ 256714; off Main St; d Rs200, s/d without bathroom Rs100/150; 📺) The cell-like rooms at this place tucked away from the main drag come with mosquito nets and hot water in the morning. There's also a rooftop restaurant.

Mama Shanta (☎ 256213; r with/without bathroom Rs150/120) Just past Nimmu House is this rather gloomy and basic homestay, but the

kindly old lady of the house does her best to make you feel at home. It's right next to the beach.

Shastri's Guest House (☎ 256220; dr_murti@rediffmail.com; Main St; s/d Rs150/200) This place has a hostel-like feel to it. The singles are tiny; the doubles in the new block out the back are bright and airy, with squat loos. Some have balconies and palm-tree views.

Nimmu House (☎ 256730; nimmuhouse@yahoo.com; s/d old block Rs250/500, new block Rs300/1000; 📺) Just off the foot trail along the beach is this pleasant option run by a friendly family. The rooms in the new block are nice, with tiled floors and balconies.

ourpick Om Beach Resort (☎ 257052; www.ombeachresort.com; Bangle Gudde; d incl breakfast Indian/foreigner Rs2100/US\$80; ♻️ 📺) This little jewel sits on a headland 2km out of Gokarna off the Om Beach road. Set amid lawns and shady trees, its red-brick cottages are excellently designed, and its restaurant serves some delectable seafood. There's a professional ayurvedic centre on site, offering short sessions (from Rs750) as well as longer treatment packages.

Eating

The chai shops on all Gokarna's beaches rustle up basic snacks and meals.

Pai Hotel (Car St; mains Rs20-35; ☎ 6am-9.30pm) A good place for veg food.

Pai Restaurant (Main St; mains Rs25-40; ☎ 6.30am-9.30pm) This place draws in visiting pilgrims with its vegetarian fare.

Mahalaxmi Restaurant (meals Rs30-70) This popular hang-out promises 'all types of world famous dishes' (eg banana pancakes and cornflakes!) in myriad ways. The ambience, however, is relaxing.

Namaste Cafe (meals Rs30-80; ☎ 7am-11pm) Om Beach's social centre serves decent Western standbys – pizzas and burgers – and some Israeli specials.

Getting There & Away

BUS

From Gokarna's rudimentary **bus stand**, rickety buses rumble north to Karwar (Rs29, 1½ hours), which has connections to Goa. Direct buses run northeast to Hubli (Rs92, four hours), where you can change for Hospet and Hampi. There are two direct evening buses to Bengaluru (semi-deluxe/sleeper Rs256/456, 12 hours).

TRAIN

Only slow passenger trains stop at **Gokarna Rd train station** (☎ 279487), 9km from town. A 10.40am train heads daily to Margao in Goa (Rs21, three hours). To head further south to Mangalore (Rs42, five hours), a train departs daily at 4.20pm.

A better idea is to head out by local bus to **Kumta station** (☎ 223820) 25km away, to board one of the expresses which stop there. From Kumta, the 2.14am *Matsyagandha Express* goes to Mangalore (sleeper Rs168, four hours); the return train leaves Kumta at 6.38pm for Margao (sleeper Rs141, 3½ hours) in Goa. Many of the hotels and small travel agencies in Gokarna can book tickets. Ankola Station, 25km south of Gokarna, is also a convenient railhead.

Autorickshaws charge Rs100 to go to Gokarna Rd station. Buses go hourly (Rs7) and also meet arriving passenger trains. A bus to Kumta station is Rs12.

JOG FALLS

☎ 08186

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

To get a good view of the falls, bypass the scrappy area close to the bus stand and hike to the foot of the falls down a 1200-plus step path. It takes about an hour to get down and two to come up. Watch out for leeches in the wet season.

The **tourist office** (☎ 244732; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat) is above the food stalls close to the bus stand. On site is the **KSTDC Hotel Mayura Gerusoppa** (☎ 244732; s/d Rs300/400), about 150m from the car park, with enormous, musty rooms.

Stalls near the bus stand serve omelettes, thalis, noodles and rice dishes, plus hot and cold drinks. KSTDC's mediocre **restaurant** (meals Rs30-50) is just next door.

Jog Falls has buses roughly every hour southeast to Shimoga (Rs45, three hours), and three daily to Karwar via Kumta (Rs43, three hours), where you can change for Gokarna (Rs12, one hour) and head north to Goa. For Mangalore, change at Shimoga.

HAMPI

☎ 08394

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

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

History

Hampi and its neighbouring areas find mention in the Hindu epic Ramayana as Kishkinda, the realm of the monkey gods. In 1336 Telugu prince Harihararaya chose Hampi as the site for his new capital, Vijayanagar which, over the next couple of centuries, grew into one of the largest Hindu empires in Indian history. By the 16th century it was a thriving metropolis of about 500,000 people, its busy bazaars dabbling in international commerce, brimming with precious stones and merchants from faraway lands. All this ended in a stroke in 1565, when a confederacy of Deccan sultanates razed Vijayanagar to the ground, striking it a death blow from which it never recovered.

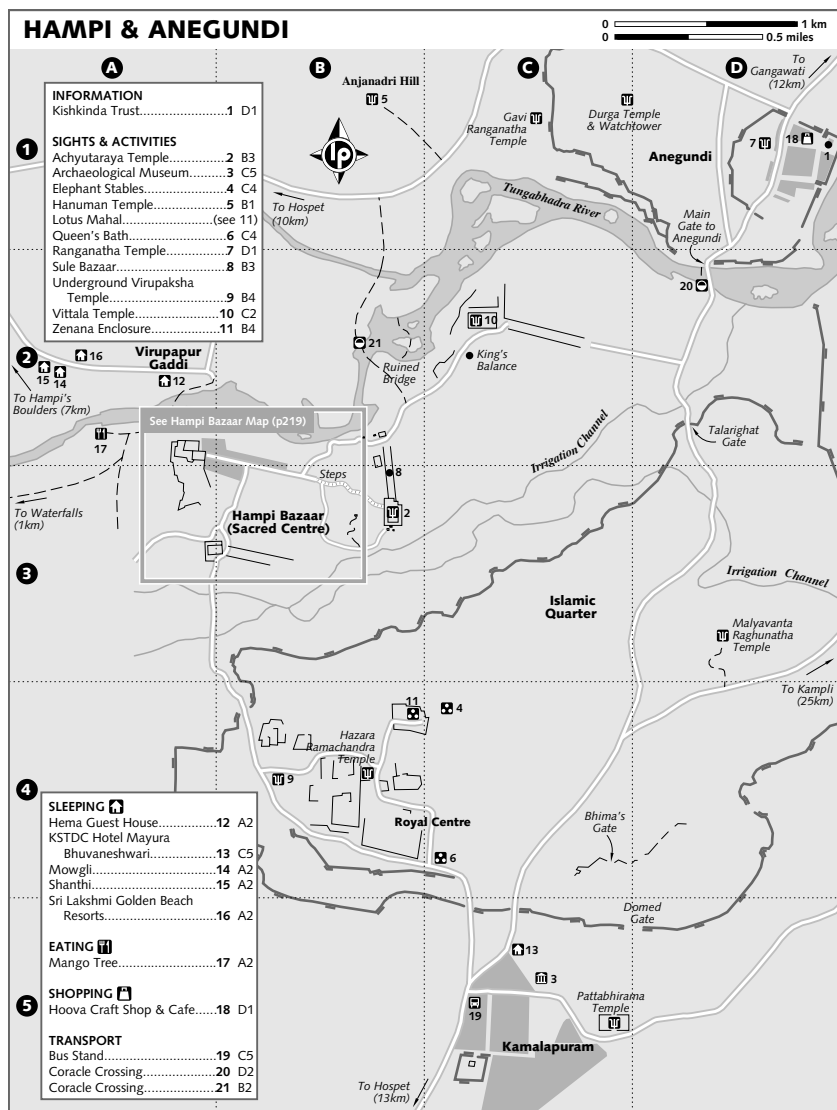
A different battle rages in Hampi today, between conservationists bent on protecting Hampi's architectural heritage and the locals who have settled there. A master plan is being prepared to notify all of Hampi's ruins as protected monuments, while resettling villagers at a new commercial-cum-residential complex away from the architectural enclosures. However, implementation is bound to take time, given the resistance from the locals who fear their livelihoods might be affected by the relocation process. **Global Heritage Fund**

(www.globalheritagefund.org) has more details about Hampi's endangered heritage.

Orientation

Hampi Bazaar and the southern village of Kamalapuram are the two main points of entry to the ruins. Kamalapuram has the KSTDC Hotel and the archaeological museum. But the

main travellers' scene is Hampi Bazaar, a village crammed with budget lodges, shops and restaurants, all dominated by the majestic Virupaksha Temple. The ruins are divided into two main areas: the Sacred Centre, around Hampi Bazaar; and the Royal Centre, towards Kamalapuram. To the northeast across the Tungabhadra River is the village of Anegundi (see p221).



Information

Andhra Bank (Map p219) Has an ATM off the entrance to Hampi Bazaar.

Aspiration Stores (Map p219; ☎ 10am-1pm & 4-8pm) For books on the area. Try *Hampi* by John M Fritz and George Michell, a good architectural study.

Canara Bank (Map p219; ☎ 241243; ☎ 11am-2pm Mon-Tue & Thu-Fri, 11am-12.30pm Sat) Changes travellers cheques and gives cash advances on credit cards.

Hampi Heritage Gallery (Map p219; ☎ 10am-1pm & 3-6pm) Sells books and offers half-day walking or cycling tours for Rs200.

Sree Rama Cyber Cafe (Map p219; per hr Rs30; ☎ 7am-11pm) The best of Hampi's internet cafes. It also burns CDs of digital snaps for Rs50.

Tourist Office (Map p219; ☎ 241339; ☎ 10am-5.30pm Sat-Thu) Can arrange guides for Rs300/500 for a half/full day.

Dangers & Annoyances

Hampi is generally a safe, peaceful place. However, don't wander around the ruins after dark or alone, as muggings are not unreported. Besides, it can be dangerous terrain to get lost in, especially at night.

Sights & Activities

VIKUPAKSHA TEMPLE

The focal point of Hampi Bazaar is the **Virupaksha Temple** (Map p219; ☎ 241241; admission Rs2; ☎ dawn-dusk), one of the city's oldest structures. The main *gopuram* (gateway tower), almost 50m high, was built in 1442, with a smaller one added in 1510. The main shrine is dedicated to Virupaksha, a form of Shiva.

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

To the south, overlooking Virupaksha Temple, **Hemakuta Hill** (Map p219) has a scattering of early ruins, including monolithic sculptures of Narasimha (Vishnu in his man-lion incarnation) and Ganesh. It's worth the short walk up for the view over the bazaar. At the east end of Hampi Bazaar is a **Nandi statue** (Map p219), around which stand some of the colonnaded blocks of the ancient marketplace. This is the main location for **Vijaya Utsav**, the Hampi arts festival held in November.

VITTALA TEMPLE

From the eastern end of Hampi Bazaar, a track, best covered on foot, leads left along

the riverbank to the **Vittala Temple** (Map p217; Indian/foreigner Rs10/250; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm), about 2km away. The undisputed highlight of the Hampi ruins, the 16th-century temple is in fairly good condition, though a few cement scaffolds have been erected to keep the main structure from collapsing.

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

Retain your ticket for same-day admission into the Zenana Enclosure and Elephant Stables in the Royal Centre.

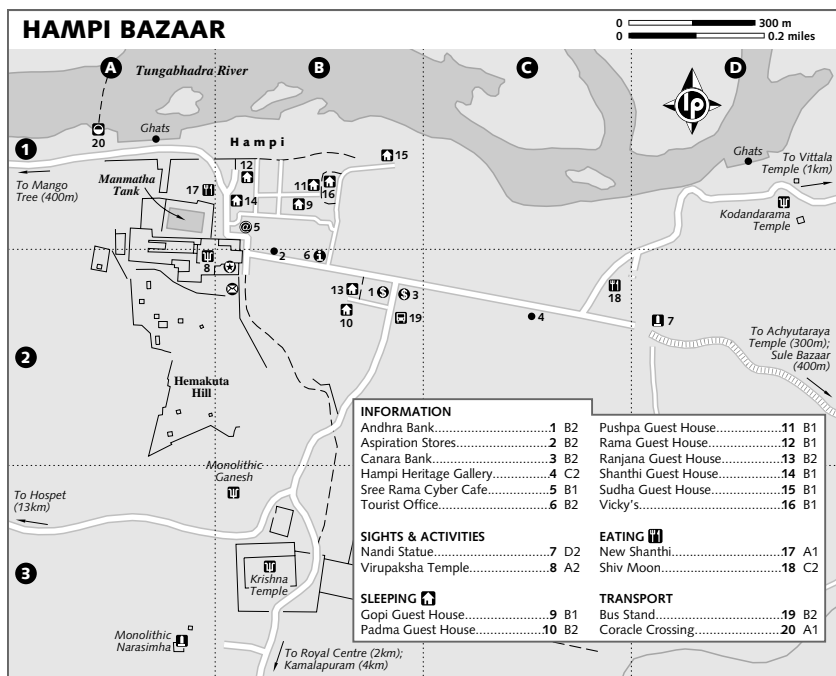
SULE BAZAAR & ACHYUTARAYA TEMPLE

Halfway along the path from Hampi Bazaar to the Vittala Temple, a track to the right leads over the rocks to deserted **Sule Bazaar** (Map p217), one of ancient Hampi's principal centres of commerce. At the southern end of this area is the **Achyutaraya Temple** (Map p217). Its isolated location at the foot of Matanga Hill makes it quietly atmospheric, doubly so since it is visited by few tourists.

ROYAL CENTRE

While it can be accessed by a 2km foot trail from the Achyutaraya Temple, the Royal Centre is best reached via the Hampi-Kamalapuram road. It's a flatter area compared to the rest of Hampi, where the boulders have been shaved off to create stone walls. A number of Hampi's major sites stand here, within the walled ladies' quarters called the **Zenana Enclosure** (Map p217; Indian/foreigner Rs10/250; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm). There's the **Lotus Mahal** (Map p217), a delicately designed pavilion which was supposedly the queen's recreational mansion. The Lotus Mahal overlooks the **Elephant Stables** (Map p217), a grand building with domed chambers where state elephants once resided. Your ticket is valid for same-day admission to the Vittala Temple.

Further south, you'll find various temples and elaborate waterworks, including the **Underground Virupaksha Temple** (Map p217;



☑ 8.30am-5.30pm) and the **Queen's Bath** (Map p217; ☑ 8.30am-5.30pm), deceptively plain on the outside but amazing within.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM

The **archaeological museum** (Map p217; ☎ 241561; Kamalapuram; admission Rs5; ☑ 10am-5pm Sat-Thu) has well-displayed collections of sculptures from local ruins, Neolithic tools, 16th-century weaponry and a large floor model of the Vijayanagar ruins.

Sleeping

There's little to choose between many of the basic rooms in Hampi Bazaar and Virupapur Gaddi. If you need AC and cable TV, stay in Kamalapuram. Prices listed can shoot up by 50% or more during Christmas, and drop just as dramatically in the low season (April to September).

HAMPI BAZAAR

Shanthi Guest House (Map p219; ☎ 241568; s/d Rs250/300, without bathroom Rs150/250) An oldie but a goodie, Shanthi offers a peaceful courtyard with a swing chair, and has plastic creep-

ers and divine posters decorating its basic rooms. There's a small shop that operates on an honour system.

Gopi Guest House (Map p219; ☎ 241695; kiran.gopi2002@yahoo.com; d Rs300; ☑) The Gopi empire has expanded to a renovated block across the road, which contains four pleasant rooms with en suite. The rooftop room, equipped with a carom board and guitar, is a nice place to hang out. It also makes a mean cup of espresso (Rs30).

Vicky's (Map p219; ☎ 241694; vikkyhampi@yahoo.co.in; d Rs350; ☑) One of the village's larger operations done up in pop purple and green, with 10 brightly painted and tiled rooms, internet access and the requisite rooftop cafe.

Pushpa Guest House (Map p219; ☎ 241440; d/tr Rs400/500) The fresh new rooms here have pink walls and brightly printed upholstery, with a cordial family playing host. The lovely sit-out on the 1st floor gives it an edge over its competitors.

Padma Guest House (Map p219; ☎ 241331; d Rs400-800) The astute Padma might have got her spellings wrong ('Recommendation by Lovely Plant', reads her business card!), but the tidy

rooms are more than inviting. Try one upstairs for great views of the Virupaksha Temple.

Other good options:

Sudha Guest House (Map p219; ☎ 652752; d from Rs200) Has a good family vibe and a riverside location.

Rama Guest House (Map p219; ☎ 241962; s/d Rs300/400) Some rooms are a little low on light, but the cool rooftop cafe seals the deal.

Ranjana Guest House (Map p219; ☎ 241696; d Rs400-600) On par with Padma Guest House. The terrace rooms have great views and TV.

VIRUPAPUR GADDI

Many travellers prefer the tranquil atmosphere of Virupapur Gaddi, across the river to the north of Hampi Bazaar. A small boat (Rs10) frequently shuttles across the river from 7am to 6pm. During the monsoon, the river runs high and ferry services may be suspended.

Hema Guest House (Map p217; ☎ 9449103008; dm/bungalows Rs100/500) One of Virupapur Gaddi's most popular spots, this place has rows of cute and comfy cottages laid out in a shady grove, and scores with its informal restaurant in a beautiful wooden belvedere overlooking the river.

Mowgli (Map p217; ☎ 329844; hampimowgli@hotmail.com; d from Rs250; 🍷) With prime views across the rice fields, shady gardens sheltering hammocks, and thatched-roof bungalows, this is a top-class chill-out spot. The rooms with views are the most expensive, around Rs500.

Shanthi (Map p217; ☎ 325352; d without bathroom Rs300, cottages Rs600) Bungalows here have rice-paddy, river and sunset views, and porches with couch swings. The restaurant does good thalis (Rs45) and pizzas (Rs70 to Rs85).

Sri Lakshmi Golden Beach Resorts (Map p217; ☎ 08533287008, 9448436537; d incl breakfast from Rs2000; 🍷 🍷) A welcome change from Hampi's basic sleeping options, this resort-style place amid paddy fields has a range of cosy cottages. The pool, sadly, won't be in commission until early 2010.

Hampi's Boulders (off Map p217; ☎ 08539265939, 9448034202; Narayanpet; d incl full board with/without AC from Rs8000/6000; 🍷 🍷) The only luxury option in these parts, this 'eco-wilderness' resort sits amid leafy gardens in Narayanpet, 7km west of Virupapur Gaddi. Accommodation is in chic cottages designed like boulders, and the food is good. The downside: you're way removed from the buzz.

KAMALAPURAM

KSTDC Hotel Mayura Bhuvaneshwari (Map p217; ☎ 08394-241574; d/tr from Rs825/1125; 🍷) This tidy government place, about 3km south of the Royal Centre, has well-appointed rooms and creature comforts such as TV and AC. A huge plus is the bar – the only legal one close to Hampi – and ayurvedic sessions (from Rs1550) on request.

Eating

With one exception, Hampi is not renowned for its restaurants. Due to Hampi's religious significance, meat is usually off the menu, and alcohol is banned. Places are open from 7am to 10pm. Several of Hampi's lodges also sport rooftop restaurants; good ones include those at Gopi Guest House, Vicky's and Rama Guest House.

New Shanthi (Map p219; mains Rs30-50) A hippie vibe, complete with trance music and acid-blue lights, hangs over this popular option serving a good selection of juices and shakes. The bakery churns out passable cookies and crumbles.

ourpick Mango Tree (Map p217; mains Rs30-90) Creativity blends with culinary excellence at this rural-themed chill-out joint, spread out under the eponymous mango tree by the riverbanks. The walk out here is through a banana plantation, and the food is delicious – the restaurant does lip-smacking dosas for breakfast and dinner. The ambience is simply overwhelming, and the terraced seating perfect for whiling away a lazy afternoon, book in hand.

Shiv Moon (Map p219; mains Rs35-90) This friendly place with pleasant views sits by the river to the east of Hampi Bazaar. It gets good reviews for the quality of its food, though the owners often tend to get politely pushy.

Waterfalls (off Map p217; mains Rs40-60) About a 2km walk west of Hampi Bazaar is this appealing operation tucked away beside shady banana plantations en route to a group of small waterfalls. The tasty Indian fare justifies the walk out of town.

Getting There & Away

While some private buses from Goa and Bengaluru will drop you at the bus stand in Hampi Bazaar, you have to go to Hospet to catch most buses out. The first bus from Hospet (Rs10, 30 minutes, half-hourly) is at 6.30am; the last one back leaves Hampi Bazaar at 8.30pm. An autorickshaw costs around

THE KISHKINDA TRUST

Since 1995, the **Kishkinda Trust** (TKT; ☎ 08533267791, 9449284496; www.thekishkindatrust.org) has been actively involved in promoting rural tourism, sustainable development and women's empowerment in Anegundi, alongside its work preserving the architectural and living heritage of the Hampi World Heritage Site. The first project in 1997 created a cottage industry of crafts using locally produced cloth, banana fibre and river grass. It now employs over 600 women, and the attractive crafts produced are marketed in ethnic product outlets across India, along with the village outlet at the **Hoova Craft Shop & Cafe** (p222).

The trust's other projects include holding cottage industry workshops and sensitising the village folk in regard to self-help and sustainable ecotourism. Its homestay program has met with enormous success, and the revenue generated through tourism now goes into community welfare, training and empowerment of village personnel as well as running interaction programs in village schools. An information and interpretation centre has also been set up, while more self-help projects have recently taken their positions at the starting line.

Rs100. See p222 for transport information for Hospet.

The overnight private sleeper bus to/from Goa (Rs550), which runs from November to March, is a popular option – but don't expect a deep sleep. If you're heading south, KSRTC has a daily Rajahamsa bus service between Hampi Bazaar and Bengaluru (Rs301, 8½ hours) leaving at 8.45pm. Numerous travel agents in Hampi Bazaar are eager to book onward bus, train and plane tickets, or arrange a car and driver.

Getting Around

Once you've seen the main sights in Hampi, exploring the rest of the ruins by bicycle is the thing to do. The key monuments are haphazardly signposted all over the site; while they're not quite adequate, you shouldn't get lost. Bicycles cost about Rs30 per day in Hampi Bazaar; mopeds can be hired for around Rs200, plus petrol. You can take your bicycle or motorbike (extra Rs10) across the river on the boat.

Walking is the only way to see all the nooks and crannies, but expect to cover at least 7km just to see the major ruins. Autorickshaws and taxis are available for sightseeing, and will drop you as close to each of the major ruins as they can. A five-hour autorickshaw tour costs Rs300.

Organised tours depart from Hospet; see p222 for details.

AROUND HAMPI Anegundi

Across the Tungabhadra River, about 5km northeast of Hampi Bazaar, sits Anegundi,

an ancient fortified village that's part of the Hampi World Heritage Site but pre-dates Hampi by way of human habitation. Gifted with a landscape similar to Hampi, quainter Anegundi has been spared the blight of commercialisation, which is why it remains a chosen getaway for those who want to soak up the local atmosphere without having to put up with the touristy vibe.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Mythically referred to as Kishkinda, the kingdom of the monkey gods, Anegundi retains many of its historic monuments, such as sections of its defensive wall and gates, and the **Ranganatha Temple** (Map p217; ☉ dawn-dusk) devoted to Rama. The whitewashed **Hanuman Temple** (Map p217; ☉ dawn-dusk), accessible by a 570-step climb atop the Anjanadri Hill, has fine views of the rugged terrain around. Many believe this is the birthplace of Hanuman, the Hindu monkey god who was Rama's devotee and helped him in his mission against Ravana. The hike up is pleasant, though you'll be courted by impish monkeys, and within the temple you'll find a horde of chillum-puffing resident sadhus!

The **Kishkinda Trust** (TKT; Map p217; ☎ 08533267791, 9449284496; www.thekishkindatrust.org), a nonprofit organisation that manages tourism in Anegundi, has a slew of nature and adventure activities that you can indulge in. Options include rock climbing, camping, trekking, rappelling and zooming. Equipment and trained instructors are provided. A string of cultural events, such as performing arts sessions and classical and folk-music concerts, are also conducted from time to time.

SLEEPING

Anegundi has several homestays, managed by the Kishkinda Trust. Contact the trust for bookings. Meals can also be provided by some of the guest houses upon prior notice.

Champa Guest House (d incl breakfast Rs600) Champa offers basic but pleasant accommodation in two rooms, and is looked after by an affable village family.

TEMA Guest House (d incl breakfast Rs600; 📺) For an alternative experience try the two rooms here, attached to the trust's information centre, where you can read up on local heritage and sit in during community interaction programs.

Naidile Guest House (r Rs1000) A charmingly rustic air hangs over this place, a renovated village home in the heart of Anegundi where you can savour all the sights and sounds of the ancient village. It can sleep up to five people.

SHOPPING

Hoova Craft Shop & Cafe (Map p217; 🕒 9.30am-5pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-2pm Sun) Here you can also pick up sundry souvenirs made by women's self-help groups of the village. It's also a lovely place for a laid-back meal or snack (from Rs20).

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Anegundi can be reached by crossing the river on a coracle (Rs10) from the pier east of the Vittala Temple. If and when the new bridge is completed, you can simply cycle across.

Alternately, you can get to Anegundi by taking a bus (Rs20, one hour) from Hospet.

HOSPET

☎ 08394 / pop 164,200

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

Information

Internet joints are common, with connections costing Rs30 per hour. ATMs are common too. The bus-stand cloakroom holds bags for Rs10 per day.

KSTDC tourist office (☎ 228537, 221008; Shanbag Circle; 🕒 10am-5.30pm Mon-Sat) Offers a Hampi tour (Rs175), daily from 9.30am to 5.30pm. The quality of

guides varies. Call ahead as tours won't run with fewer than 10 people.

State Bank of India (☎ 228576; Station Rd; 🕒 10.30am-4pm Mon-Sat) Changes currency.

Sleeping & Eating

Hotel Priyadarshini (☎ 228838; www.priyandhampi.com; Station Rd; s/d from Rs1300/1500; 📺 📺) Handily located between the bus and train stations, the fresh rooms here have balconies and TV. The outdoor nonveg restaurant-bar Manasa (mains Rs60 to Rs120) has a good menu.

Hotel Malligi (☎ 228101; www.mallighotels.com; Jabunatha Rd; d with/without AC from Rs1500/650; 📺 📺) Only the more expensive rooms here, some with a vague contemporary look, are worth it. A couple of decent restaurants, a pool (Rs35 for nonguests and guests in the cheapest rooms) and a gym are on site.

Udupi Sri Krishna Bhavan (meals Rs15-45; 🕒 6am-11pm) Opposite the bus stand, this clean spot dishes out Indian veggie fare, including thalis for Rs27.

Getting There & Away
BUS

The **bus stand** (☎ 228802) has services to Hampi from Bay 10 every half-hour (Rs10, 30 minutes). Two overnight buses head to Panaji (Rs215, 11 hours) via Margao. Express buses run to Bengaluru (ordinary/deluxe Rs320/400, nine hours); two buses go to Badami (Rs130, six hours), or you can take a bus to Gadag (Rs52, 2½ hours) and transfer. There are frequent buses to Bijapur (Rs130, six hours) and Hyderabad (Rs340, 10 hours). For Gokarna, take a bus to Hubli (Rs82, 4½ hours) and change. For Mangalore, take a morning bus to Shimoga (Rs145, five hours) and change.

TRAIN

Hospet's **train station** (☎ 228360) is a Rs15 auto-rickshaw ride from town. Every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday, a 6.30am express heads to Vasco da Gama (sleeper/2AC Rs178/643, 8½ hours). The daily *Hampi Express* heads to Hubli at 7.50am (2nd class Rs43, 3½ hours) and then to Bengaluru at 7.50pm (sleeper/2AC Rs193/738, 10 hours).

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

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