



Karnataka & Bengaluru

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Best Places to Eat

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

Best Places to Stay

- » Kabini River Lodge (p865)
- » Taj West End (p843)
- » Parklane Hotel (p856)
- » Green Hills Estate (p868)
- » SwaSwara (p875)

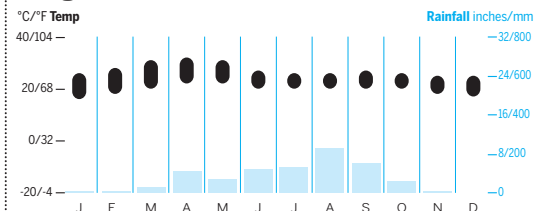
Why Go?

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

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

When to Go

Bengaluru



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

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

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

ON THE ROCKS

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

Fast Facts

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

Jungle Jaunt

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

Resources

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

Savoury South

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

DON'T MISS

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

Top State Festivals

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