



Karnataka & Bengaluru

Includes ➔

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Karavalli (p863)
- ➔ Koshy's Bar & Restaurant (p863)
- ➔ Sapphire (p877)
- ➔ Lalith Bar & Restaurant (p889)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Casa Piccola Cottage (p862)
- ➔ Green Hotel (p875)
- ➔ Vivanta (p884)
- ➔ Dhole's Den (p881)

Why Go?

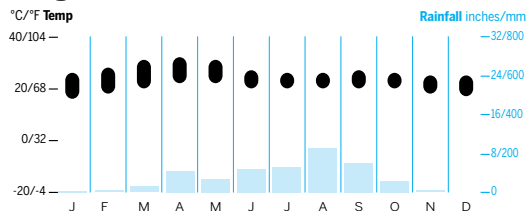
Blessed with a diverse geography that takes the highlights from its encompassing states and mixes it in with its own charms, Karnataka is an intoxicating cocktail that is quintessential India. It's a winning blend of palaces, beaches, banana groves, tiger reserves, ancient ruins and legendary hangouts.

At its nerve centre is the silicon-capital Bengaluru (Bangalore), overfed with the good life. Scattered around the epicurean city are rolling hills rife with spice and coffee plantations, the regal splendour of Mysore and jungles teeming with monkeys, tigers and Asia's biggest population of elephants.

If that all sounds too mainstream, head to the counter-cultural enclave of tranquil Hampi with hammocks, psychedelic sunsets and boulder-strewn ruins. Or the blissful beaches of Gokarna, a beach haven minus the doof doof. Or better yet, leave the tourists behind entirely and take a journey to stunning Islamic ruins of northern Karnataka.

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.

MAIN POINTS OF ENTRY

Many visitors arrive at Bengaluru's shiny modern airport, 40km north of the city. Mangalore on the western coast serves as a transit point for those going north to Goa, or south to Kerala. Hubli in central Karnataka is also a railway hub that links Hampi with Goa and Mumbai.

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

Resources

- **Karnataka Tourism** (KSTDC; www.karnatakaturism.org) Sleek government site showcasing state highlights.
- **Bengaluru city guide** (www.discoverbangalore.com) General travel info on the state's capital.
- **Hampi. India!** (www.hampi.in) Excellent resource for everything Hampi.

Food

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, p892) 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, p907) Some of India's best classical dance performances.
- **Vijaya Utsav** (Hampi Festival; ☺ Jan, Hampi., p896) A three-day extravaganza of culture, heritage and the arts at the foot of Hampi's Matanga Hill.
- **Tibetan New Year** (☺ Feb, Bylakuppe, p886) Lamas in Tibetan refugee settlements take shifts leading nonstop prayers that span the weeklong celebrations.
- **Vairamudi Festival** (☺ Mar/Apr, Melkote, p880) Lord Vishnu is adorned with jewels at Cheluvanarayana Temple, including a diamond-studded crown belonging to Mysore's former maharajas.
- **Ganesh Chaturthi** (☺ Sep, Gokarna, p894) Families march their Ganesh idols to the sea at sunset.
- **Dussehra** (☺ Oct, Mysore, p875) 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, p892) Thousands and thousands of lamps light up this Jain pilgrimage town, offering spectacular photo ops.
- **Huthri** (☺ Nov/Dec, Madikeri, p882) The Kodava community celebrates the start of the harvesting season with ceremony, music, traditional dances and much feasting for a week.