



# Andhra Pradesh

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## Best Places to Eat

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## Best Places to Stay

- » Taj Mahal Hotel (p219)
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- » Park (p232)

## Why Go?

Andhra Pradesh won't hit you over the head with its attractions. It doesn't brag about its temples or its colourful history. It's forgotten most of its palaces and royal architecture – you'll have to purposely seek them out.

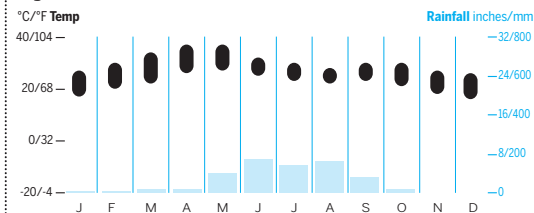
Andhra plays hard to get: its charms are subtle. But if you look closely, you'll find a long, fascinating history of arts, culture, spiritual scholarship and religious harmony. In Hyderabad's Old City, Islamic monuments, Persian-inspired architecture and the call of the muezzin speak of the city's unique heritage.

Dig a little deeper and you'll find another Andhran history: the region was an international centre of Buddhist thought for several hundred years from the 3rd century BC.

So come, but only if you're prepared to dig for the jewels to be found here. Keep your eyes open and your curiosity sharp and you're bound to find something that even Andhrans, in their modesty, hadn't thought to mention.

## When to Go

### Hyderabad



**Dec–Jan** Explore Hyderabad's sights in perfect 20–25°C weather.

**Ramadan (around Jun–Aug)** Join locals digging into *haleem*, a Ramzan favourite.

**Jun–Sep** Monsoons make travel tough, but surfing at beaches around Vizag is decent.

## MAIN POINTS OF ENTRY

Hyderabad's new Rajiv Gandhi International Airport is the main arrival point. The main train stations are Nampally and Secunderabad in Hyderabad; Imlibun is the interstate bus station.

Visakhapatnam has monthly ferries leaving to Port Blair in the Andaman Islands.

## Fast Facts

- » Population: 84.7 million
- » Area: 276,754 sq km
- » Capital: Hyderabad
- » Main languages: Telugu, Urdu, Hindi
- » Sleeping prices: \$ below ₹800, \$\$ ₹800 to ₹2500, \$\$\$ above ₹2500

## Top Tip

Hotels charge a 5% 'luxury' tax on all rooms over ₹300; it's not included in the prices quoted in this chapter. All hotels listed have 24-hour checkout unless otherwise stated.

## Resources

- » APTDC tourism ([www.aptdc.in](http://www.aptdc.in))
- » Deccan Chronicle ([www.deccanchronicle.com](http://www.deccanchronicle.com))
- » Fully Hyderabad ([www.fullhyderabad.com](http://www.fullhyderabad.com))

## Food

Hyderabad is a city known for its love of good food, and locals take great pride in their city's offerings. Andhra Pradesh's cuisine has two major influences. The Mughals brought tasty biryanis, *haleem* (pounded, spiced wheat with goat or mutton) and kebabs. The Andhra style is vegetarian and famous for its spiciness.

If you're travelling around Andhra Pradesh during Ramadan (known locally as Ramzan), look out for the clay ovens called *bhattis*. You'll probably hear them before you see them. Men gather around, taking turns to vigorously pound *haleem* inside purpose-built structures. Come nightfall, the serious business of eating begins. The taste is worth the wait. In September 2010, this love of the dish was taken a step further, being patented as 'Hyderabadi haleem'; prohibited to be served under that name unless it meets the strict quality guidelines.

## DON'T MISS

The splendid architecture of **Hyderabad's** glory days is what brings most visitors to the region.

The 16th-century Qutb Shahi produced some masterful architecture including the stunning **Charminar**, **Golconda Fort** and their final resting place at the opulent tombs.

The lavish 18th-century nizam lifestyle is on display at sites such as **Chowmahalla Palace**, **Nizam's Museum** and the **Falaknuma Palace**, previously the residence of the sixth nizam and now a decadent hotel.

## Top State Festivals

- » Sankranti (Jan, statewide) This important Telugu festival marks the end of harvest season. Kite-flying abounds, women decorate their doorsteps with colourful *kolams* (or *rangolis* – rice-flour designs), and men decorate cattle with bells and fresh horn paint.
- » Lumbini Festival (2nd Fri in Dec, Hyderabad, p214, Nagarjunakonda, p227) The three-day festival honours Andhra's Buddhist heritage.
- » Visakha Utsav (Dec/Jan, Visakhapatnam, p231) A celebration of all things Visakhapatnam, with classical and folk dance and music performances; some events are staged on the beach.