

PLAN YOUR TRIP

YOUR PLANNING TOOL KIT

Photos, itineraries, lists and suggestions to help you put together your perfect trip

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Grand Temples & Ancient Ruins
No one has ever discovered a more awe-inspiring site than the ruins of Hampi. Home to the spectacular Virupaksha Temple, the 16th-century Hampi Temple and the 15th-century Hampi Temple, the site is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Local Festivals
Experience the vibrant colors and rhythms of the local festivals. The most famous is the Hampi Festival, which takes place every year in the month of September.

City Sophisticate
Experience the vibrant colors and rhythms of the local festivals. The most famous is the Hampi Festival, which takes place every year in the month of September.

CHILDREN'S HIGHLIGHTS

- **Hampi** Make like the Flintstones on the boulder River, crossable by crocodile, explore magical areas at the riverside Mango Tree.
- **Elephants in Karnataka** Visit the pachyderm pens near Madikeri get busy bathing and feeding.
- **Goa's dolphins** Splash out on a dolphin-spot beach to see the sleek grey mammals cavorting.
- **Hill Station Monkeys** Head up to a hill station, fold monkeys that will readily sneak into your bed of Hobnobbs if you give them half a chance. Be awed.

Funnest Forms of Transport

- **Auto-rickshaw** Hurdle the back alley to create
- **Hand-pulled rickshaw, Matheran** A narrow of the way up to this cute, monkey-infested hill is chosen to continue to the village on horseback or rickshaw.
- **Backwater boat, Allepuzha** Take a cruise on beautiful, mangrove-infested backwaters. If you're Saturday in August, take the kids along to see the Boat race.
- **Best Beachfront Kick-backs**
- **Palolem, Goa** Hole up in a beachfront palm-t



UNDERSTAND SOUTH INDIA

GET MORE FROM YOUR TRIP

Learn about the big picture, so you can make sense of what you see

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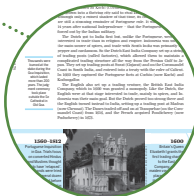
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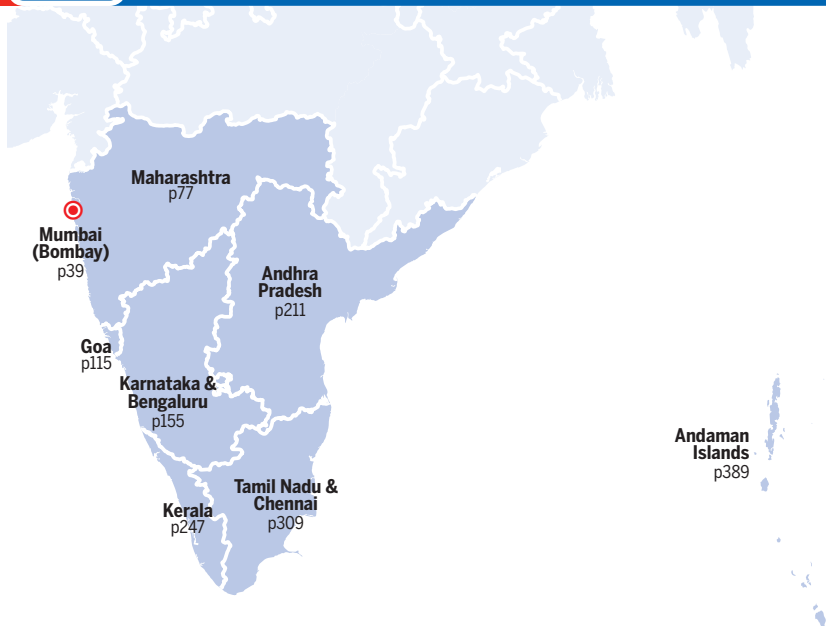
South India Today

The Kashmir Epic
The violence between pro-India and pro-Pakistan forces in the Kashmir Valley



ON THE ROAD

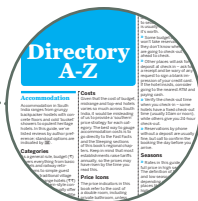
YOUR COMPLETE DESTINATION GUIDE
In-depth reviews, detailed listings
and insider tips



SURVIVAL GUIDE

VITAL PRACTICAL INFORMATION TO
HELP YOU HAVE A SMOOTH TRIP

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THIS EDITION WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY

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Anirban Mahapatra, Kevin Raub



Look out for these icons:



Our author's
recommendation



A green or
sustainable option



No payment
required

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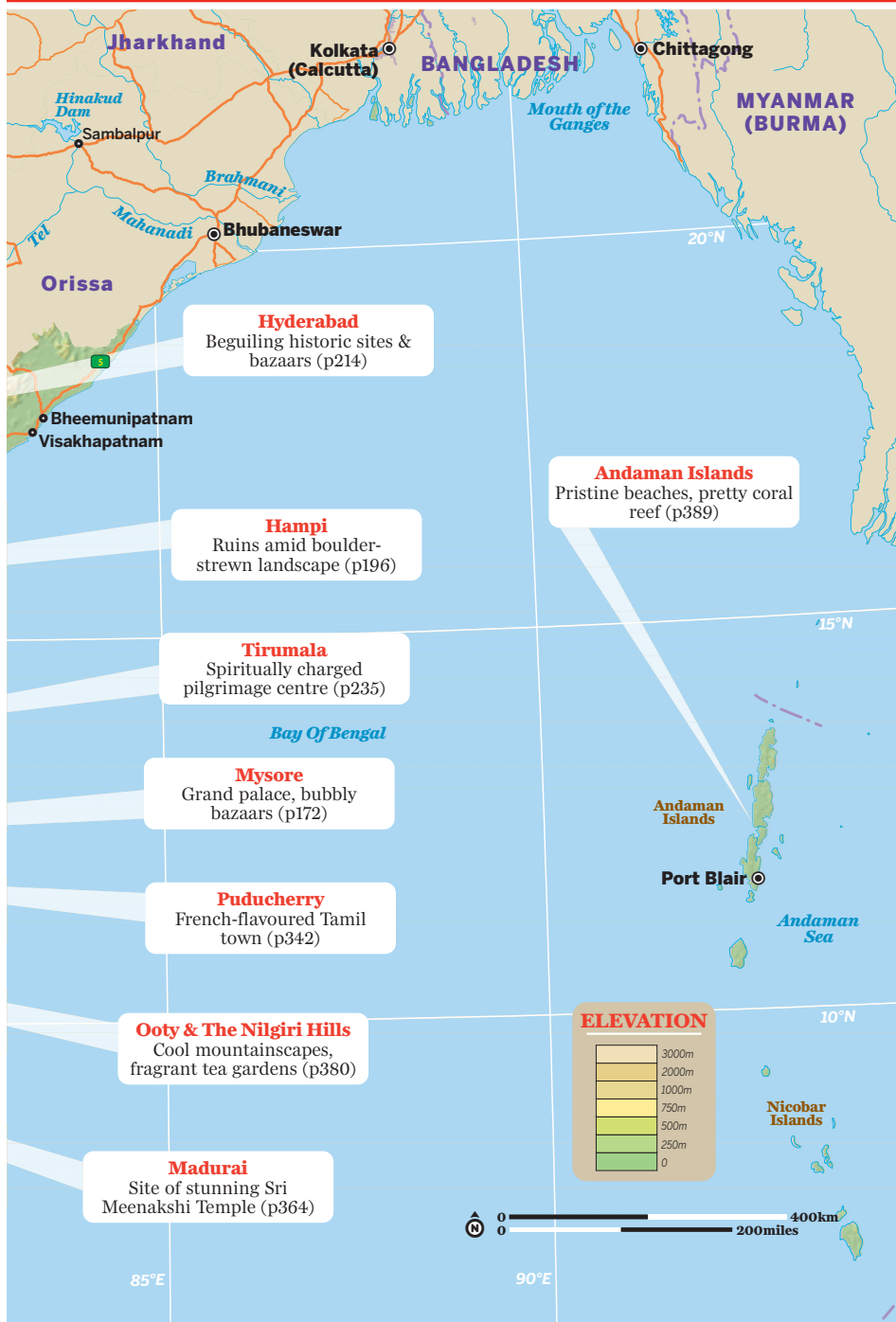
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South India & Kerala

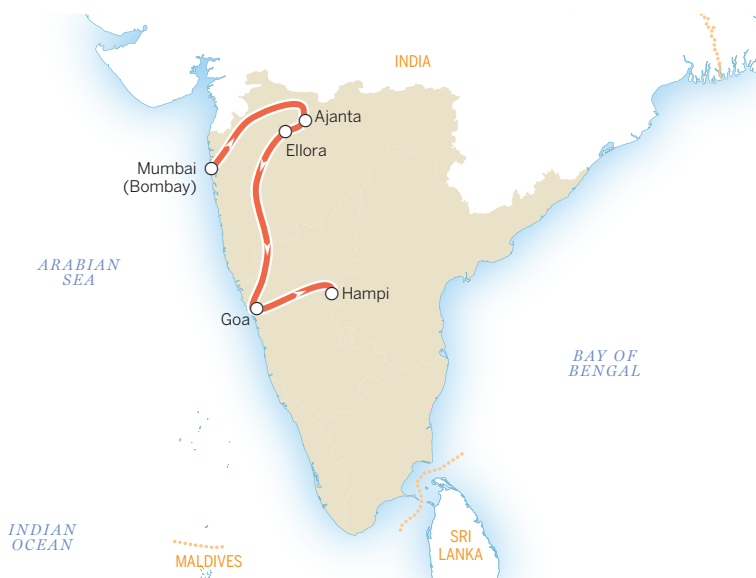


Top Experiences >



itineraries

Whether you've got six days or 60, these itineraries provide a starting point for the trip of a lifetime. Want more inspiration? Head online to lonelyplanet.com/thorntree to chat with other travellers.



2 weeks

Goa, Caves & Cities

Begin in cosmopolitan **Mumbai**, the beating heart of Bollywood and site of some of the nation's best shopping, eating and drinking opportunities. Take a sunset stroll along Marine Drive, a curvaceous ocean-side promenade dubbed the 'Queen's Necklace' because of its sparkling night lights. Catch a ferry to **Elephanta Island** – just 9km from Mumbai's historic Gateway of India – to marvel at its stunning rock-cut temples and impressive triple-faced sculpture of Lord Shiva. Next, head northeast to explore the ancient cave art at **Ajanta** and **Ellora**. Located within 100km of each other, the Buddhist caves of Ajanta are clustered along a horseshoe-shaped gorge, while those of Ellora – which contain a mix of Hindu, Jain and Buddhist shrines – are situated on a 2km-long escarpment. After soaking up cave culture, slide southwest to tropical **Goa** for some soul-reviving sandcastle therapy. Wander through a lush Goan spice plantation, visit Portuguese-era cathedrals, shop at colourful flea markets and feast on fresh seafood before travelling east to **Hampi** in neighbouring Karnataka. Ramble around Hampi's enigmatic boulder-strewn landscape and imagine what life here was like when it was a centre of the mighty Vijayanagar Empire.



3 weeks

Seaside & Backwaters

South India is blessed with beautiful beaches and tropical waterways. The south-western shoreline is the star attraction, but there are a number of southeastern coastal towns that also deserve exploration.

After spending a couple of days enjoying the sights and culinary treats of steamy **Chennai**, slide south to **Mamallapuram** (Mahabalipuram) to admire the fine bas-relief work of the World Heritage-listed Shore Temple, which peers over the Bay of Bengal. Travel further south to French-flavoured **Puducherry** (Pondicherry), a pretty coastal town where you can fuel up on robust curries or delicate crepes after rambling around the cobbled lanes of the French Quarter. Sunset is a perfect time to take an unhurried stroll along Puducherry's scenic beachside promenade. Next stop, **Madurai**, to marvel at the striking Sri Meenakshi Temple, abode of a triple-breasted fish-eyed goddess. This sprawling sacred complex is a veritable feast of masterfully carved pillars, friezes and brightly coloured figurines. It's now time to dip your toes in the warm waters of **Kovalam**, one of Kerala's premier beach resorts or, if you prefer more of a backpacker vibe, **Varkala** – further north – with its dramatic sea-cliffs and long sandy beaches. Both are super spots to soak up the sun, indulge in rejuvenating Ayurvedic treatments and tuck into wonderfully fresh seafood. When you're all beached out, make a beeline to **Alappuzha** (Alleppey), gateway to Kerala's famed backwaters. Take a languid houseboat cruise along the palm-fringed network of shimmering rivers, glassy lagoons and slender canals that pass tiny fishing villages, expansive emerald green rice paddies and thick coconut groves. While gliding along the silken waterways, keep your eyes peeled for boats carting bulging bags of coir (coconut fibre), copra (dried coconut kernels) and cashews – major exports of this region. If you're in Alappuzha on the second Saturday of August, don't miss the spectacular Nehru Trophy Snake Boat Race. Next, head north to **Kochi** (Cochin) – a knot of islands and peninsulas connected by bridges and ferries – where you can stay at a gorgeous colonial-era mansion in evocative Fort Cochin; see traditional Chinese fishing nets fluttering in the breeze like giant perforated moths; catch a Kathakali performance; and peruse the eclectic mix of historic sites that include magnificent Portuguese-era cathedrals.



2 weeks

Cities & Sacred Sites

Delve into **Chennai's** rich history with a wander around the Government Museum before going to the ancient Shiva Kapaleeshwarar Temple with its *gopuram* (gateway tower). Take a look at San Thome Cathedral, a soaring Roman Catholic church, before checking out the military memorabilia at the Fort St George museum. Travel south to **Mamallapuram** (Mahabalipuram) to explore the superb rock-cut shrines that hark back to the Pallava dynasty. Next, head to **Puducherry** (Pondicherry) to feast your eyes on the faded buildings of the French Quarter; the 18th-century Church of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception; and the Sri Manakula Vinayagar Temple. Time to move on to **Tiruvannamalai** to see the Arunachaleswar Temple, one of the country's largest sacred complexes. For more spiritual sustenance head to Chidambaram, site of the Nataraja Temple (one of South India's holiest Shiva sites) followed by a trip to **Madurai** to savour the Sri Meenakshi Temple, another architectural superstar. Wrap up your tour in **Hyderabad**, home to historic monuments that include the Golconda Fort and the Charminar.

2 weeks

Cities & Sanctuaries

Spend a few days indulging in the culinary and shopping delights of **Bengaluru** (Bangalore). For a taste of the city's royal past visit the 18th-century Tipu Sultan Palace and whimsical Bengaluru Palace, then go to the breezy Lalbagh Botanical Gardens – home to over 1000 different plant species that include centuries-old trees. The next stop is **Mysore**. Shop for sandalwood and silk in the city's vibrant bazaars and gawp at the Maharaja's Palace, an uber-grand complex topped with rhubarbered and chalky-white domes. Slide south to the sprawling **Bandipur National Park**, in southern Karnataka, to scout for wild elephants, chitals (spotted deer), sloth bears, Indian bison and elusive tigers. Slip further south to the cool hill town of **Ooty** (Udhagamandalam), one of South India's most loved summer holiday retreats. Enjoy stunningly panoramic views from the Doddabetta Lookout, row a boat on the rippling lake and scoff salty snacks in the bubbly bazaar. Descend to peaceful **Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary** in Kumily (Kerala) and join a wildlife-spotting trek – apart from teeming birdlife that includes kingfishers and owls, the jungle is home to lion-tailed macaques, elephants and even otters.



Amy Karafin

Goa

Indian in several former lives, Amy headed straight to India after university for a four-month trip that would turn out to be karmically ordained. She spent the next few years alternating between New York and faraway lands until, fed up with the irony of being a travel editor in a Manhattan cubicle, she relinquished her Metro-Card and her black skirts to make a living on the road. She has been freelancing semi-nomadically ever since, setting up shop in Bombay as much as possible.



Anirban Mahapatra

Maharashtra, Karnataka & Bengaluru

For seven long years, Anirban ran a nifty travel scam out of a reporter's cubicle in a Delhi newspaper office. He'd sell outlandish story ideas to gullible editors, and then hare off across the Indian subcontinent in the name of intrepid journalism. When his bluff was finally called, he promptly changed his designation to travel writer, and thereby legitimised his trade. Anirban has regularly contributed to Lonely Planet guidebooks since 2007. When not travelling, he cools his heels in Kolkata.



Kevin Raub

Mumbai (Bombay)

Kevin Raub grew up in Atlanta, USA and started his career as a music journalist in New York, working for *Men's Journal* and *Rolling Stone* magazines. Over a decade of trips to India, he's ogled the Taj Mahal, rejuvenated at Maharaja-palace spas in the Himalaya, tracked tigers in Madhya Pradesh and navigated Keralan backwaters, but what magnetically draws him back to the subcontinent every time is far more basic: the absolutely mind-blowing cuisine, which – knock on wood – has never made him sick. You can find him at www.kevinraub.net or at 35,000 feet.



OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Melbourne, London and Oakland, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS



Sarina Singh

Coordinating Author After finishing a business degree in Melbourne, Sarina travelled to India where she completed a hotel corporate traineeship before working as a journalist. After five years in India she returned to Melbourne and pursued post-graduate journalism qualifications before coauthoring Lonely Planet's very first edition of *Rajasthan*. She has worked on 30 Lonely Planet books, writes for other major international publications and has a column in India's *Lonely Planet Magazine*.

Sarina is also the author of two books – *Polo in India* and *India: Essential Encounters*. Her award-nominated documentary premiered at the Melbourne International Film Festival before screening in Australia and Europe. See www.sarinasingh.com. Sarina wrote most of the Plan Your Trip, Understand and Survival Guide chapters.

Read more about Sarina at:
lonelyplanet.com/members/sarinasingh



Trent Holden

Andhra Pradesh, Andaman Islands

On his last visit to Andhra Pradesh Trent made his film debut as an extra in a Tollywood film. A decade later he's still waiting for a follow-up call (perhaps it's time to let that dream go...), but in the meantime, any opportunity to head back there suits him fine. This is his fourth trip to India, a place he loves like no other. When not on the road researching and coauthoring for titles such as *Nepal* and *Indonesia*, Trent works as a freelancer editor with Lonely Planet.



Abigail Hole

Kerala

Abigail was first bewitched by India around 15 years ago, and she's returned with increasing regularity – visiting three times in 2010 alone. She cowrote the first edition of *Rajasthan, Delhi & Agra* and has written about India for various newspapers and magazines, including *Lonely Planet Magazine*. This edition of *South India* gave her the welcome opportunity of covering Kerala, which has to be one of her favourite places.



Kate James

Tamil Nadu & Chennai

Melbourne-born Kate grew up in Ooty, where her parents taught at an international school and travelled using the very first edition of Lonely Planet's *India*. Journalism in Australia led Kate to an inhouse editing job at Lonely Planet and then into a freelance writing and editing career. She is the author of *Women of the Gobi* (Pluto Press, 2006).

OVER MORE
PAGE WRITERS

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