



Andhra Pradesh

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Best Places to Eat

- Hotel Shadab (p243)
- Shah Ghouse Cafe (p243)
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- Southern Spice (p244)
- Dharani (p252)

Best Off the Beaten Track

- Maredumilli (p254)
- Guntupalli (p257)
- Sankaram (p253)
- Moula Ali Dargah (p236)
- Bhongir (p251)

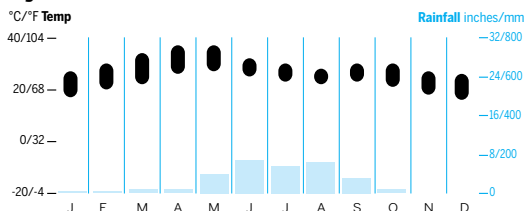
Why Go?

Andhra Pradesh won't hit you over the head with its attractions. It doesn't have the flashiness of Rajasthan or the pride of Tamil Nadu; it doesn't brag. So when you come here – to see the ornate palaces, tombs and mosques of Hyderabad's bygone royal families, or to wander the deserted ruins of hilltop monasteries that once housed monks from across Asia – you might be the only traveller around. You might even be the only person around. And if the place is out of the way, as so many of Andhra's sights are, you might just feel like you've discovered it yourself.

So come, but be prepared to dig for the jewels; get ready to wend your way through paddy fields and 500-year-old urban markets, to climb towering smooth-granite hills, and to feel the liberating uncertainty of being off the tourist trail and in a wonderland of forgotten history.

When to Go

Hyderabad



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

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

Jun–Sep Rains make travel tough, but they also make for good surfing at Vizag beaches.

Food

Andhra Pradesh is known for its residents' love of good food, and Hyderabadis especially take great pride in their city's offerings. The state'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 across India for its delicious spiciness. If you're in Hyderabad 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 2010, this love of the dish was taken a step further when 'Hyderabad haleem' was given 'Geographical Indication' protection: it cannot be served by that name unless it meets strict quality guidelines.

DON'T MISS

The splendid architecture of **Hyderabad's** royal kingdoms – which ran from the 16th century to Indian independence – is what brings most visitors to the region. The Qutb Shahis produced some masterful architecture, including the stunning **Charminar**, **Golconda Fort** and their final resting place, the opulent **Qutb Shahi tombs**. The lavish nizam lifestyle is on display all over Hyderabad, especially at **Chowmahalla Palace**, **HEH the Nizam's Museum** and **Falaknuma Palace**, now an extravagant hotel. Before any of these wealthy princes came along, another prince held sway: the Buddha. Scenic monastic ruins at **Nagarjunakonda**, **Guntupalli** and **Sankaram** will bring you to a peaceful place.

Top State Festivals

- **Sankranti** (☺ Jan, statewide) This important Telugu festival marks the end of harvest season. Kite-flying abounds, doorsteps are decorated with colourful *kolams* (rice-flour designs) and men adorn cattle with bells and fresh horn paint.
- **Brahmotsavam** (☺ Sep/Oct, Tirumala, p256) This nine-day festival sees the Venkateshwara temple adorned in decorations. Special *pujas* and chariot processions are held, and it's an auspicious time for *darshan* (deity-viewing).
- **Muharram** (☺ Oct/Nov; Hyderabad, p240) Muharram commemorates the martyrdom of Mohammed's grandson. Shiites wear black in mourning, and throngs gather at Badshahi Ashurkhana.
- **Visakha Utsav** (☺ Dec/Jan, Visakhapatnam, p251) A celebration of all things Visakhapatnam, with classical and folk dance and music performances, some on the beach.

MAIN POINTS OF ENTRY

Hyderabad's Rajiv Gandhi International Airport, Nampally and Secunderabad train stations, and Mahatma Gandhi Bus Station (Imlibun) are the main arrival points.

Visakhapatnam has monthly ferries 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 ₹1000, \$\$ ₹1000 to ₹3000, \$\$\$ above ₹3000

Top Tip

Tea's gaining a foothold, but Andhra is traditionally coffee country. Skip the chai here and order the filter coffee when you see it.

Resources

- **APTDC** (www.aptdc.in)
- **Deccan Chronicle** (www.deccanchronicle.com)
- **Full Hyderabad** (www.fullhyderabad.com)
- **Zomato** (www.zomato.com)