

Around Goa

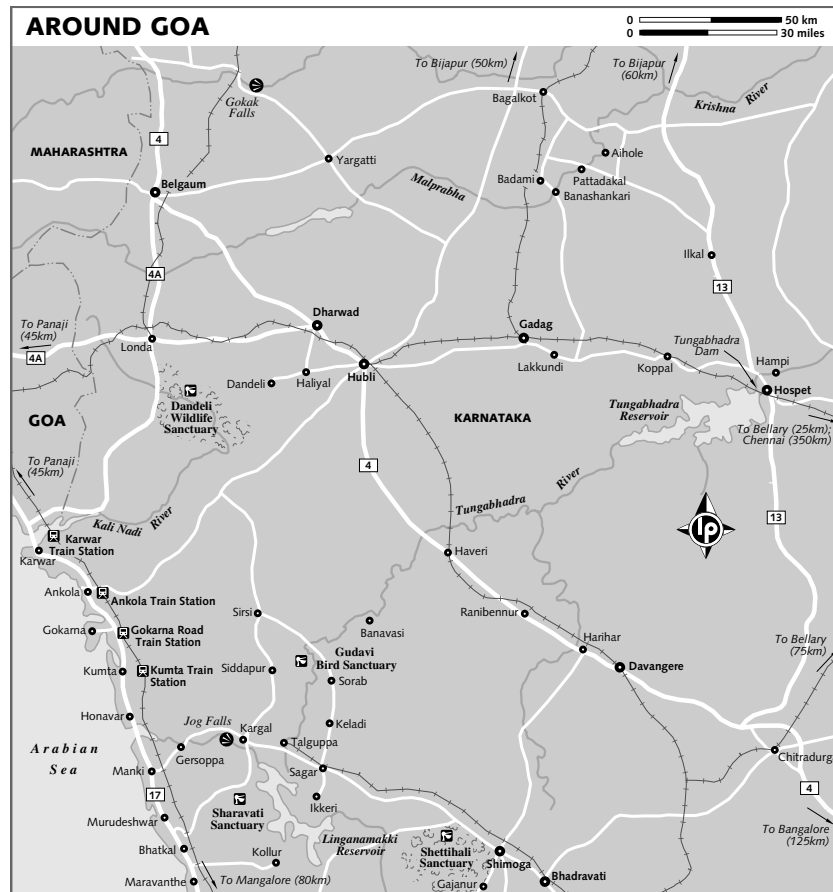
It's easy to forget that Goa is part of a bigger country, but it's just as easy to get out there and explore it. There are several interesting excursions that are no more than a day's journey over the border in Karnataka, one of India's most interesting states.

Gokarna is situated about 60km south of the southern border of Goa in northern Karnataka. The village itself is one of the most holy Hindu sites in South India, but it's the beautiful near-deserted beaches that have drawn travellers over the years – many of them ex-Goa hippies escaping the hype, or new adventurers who've heard the rumours. It will indeed be interesting to see how Gokarna evolves (or devolves) over the years.

About 50km southeast of Gokarna are Jog Falls, the highest in India. The flow of the falls is not as grand as it once was, but an exploration of the surrounding countryside still makes for a worthy excursion. The ultimate journey (albeit an easy bus ride) from Goa is to Hampi, the magnificent ruined city of the Vijayanagar Empire and a renowned travellers' centre. The Virupaksha Temple stands proudly at almost 50m, and is one of the earliest structures in this evocatively historical area. Hampi's Vittala Temple, with its magnanimous sculpture and alluring 'musical' pillars, is unlike anything you'll see in Goa, and one of the most distinct memories you'll hold long after you've left.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Do some easy trekking through the spectacular countryside around **Jog Falls** (p202)
- Float with pilgrims through the sleepy town of **Gokarna** (opposite)
- Immerse yourself in the thick of the colourful chaos of **Hampi Bazaar** (p204)
- Explore the maze of stone walls of Hampi's **Royal Centre** (p204)
- Take in the World Heritage-listed **Vittala Temple** (p204) and bask in the regality of its sculptural work



GOKARNA

☎ 08386

Gokarna (Cow's Ear), 50km south of Karwar, attracts a potpourri of Hindu pilgrims, Sanskrit scholars, hippies and beach-lovers. For Hindus, Gokarna is one of the most sacred sites in South India, and the atmosphere is colourful and devout. It's a sleepy, charming town with wooden houses on the main street and attractive traditional houses in nearby alleys. Some locals feel the foreign influx has tarnished the holy atmosphere, while others are happy with the extra income it has generated. Modesty is probably your best policy here: keep shoulders and knees covered and take your parties to the beach.

Information

Pai STD Shop (Main St; ☎ 9am-9pm) Changes cash and travellers cheques and gives advances on Visa.

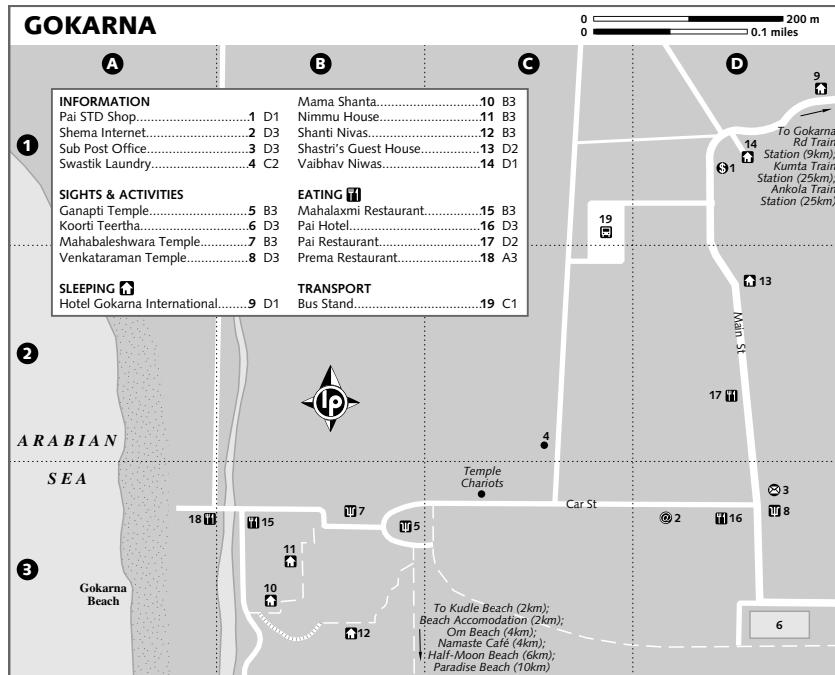
Shema Internet (Car Rd; per hr Rs 40; ☎ 7.30am-midnight)

Sub post office (1st fl, cnr Car & Main Sts)

Swastik Laundry (☎ 8.30am-1pm & 4-9pm)

Sights TEMPLES

Foreigners are not allowed inside Gokarna's temples, but you'll certainly bear witness to religious rituals around town. At the western end of Car St is the **Mahabaleshwara Temple**, home to a revered lingam (phallic symbol of Shiva). Nearby is the **Ganapati Temple**, which honours the role Ganesh



played in rescuing the lingam. At the other end of the street is the **Venkataraman Temple**, and 100m south of this is **Koorti Teertha**, the large temple tank (reservoir), where locals, pilgrims and immaculately dressed Brahmins perform their ablutions next to dhobi-wallahs on the ghats.

BEACHES

Travellers have been drifting into Gokarna for some time now, lured by stories of beaches that rival anything Goa has to offer. Gokarna village has its own beach, but the best sands are via a footpath that begins on the southern side of the Ganapati Temple and heads southward (if you reach the bathing tank – or find yourself clawing up rocks – you're on the wrong path).

Twenty minutes on the path will bring you to the top of a barren headland with expansive sea views. On the southern side is **Kudle Beach** (kood-lee), the first in a series of four perfect beaches, backed by the foothills of the Western Ghats. Several shops on Kudle Beach sell basic snacks and drinks and offer basic accommodation.

At the southern end of Kudle a track climbs over the next headland, and a further 20-minute walk brings you to **Om Beach**, with a handful of chai shops and shacks. A dusty road provides vehicle access to Om (Rs 200 in an autorickshaw), but it's generally deserted except on holidays and some weekends, when day-trippers come by the car load. By the time you arrive, however, the new mega resort may have disrupted Om's *shanti* (inner peace and tranquillity). To the south, the more isolated **Half-Moon Beach** and **Paradise Beach** are a 30-minute and one-hour walk, respectively.

Depending on the crowds, boats run from Gokarna Beach (look for the fishermen) to Kudle (Rs 100) and Om (Rs 200).

Don't walk between the beaches and Gokarna after dark, and don't walk alone at any time – it's easy to get lost and muggings have occurred. For a wee fee, most lodges will safely stow valuables and baggage.

Sleeping

The choice here is generally between a rudimentary shack on the beach or a basic but

more comfortable room in town. The advantages of being on the beach are obvious and, since it's a fair hike from town, you're pretty much left to your own devices.

BEACHES

December to January is high season on the beaches. Most places provide at least a bedroll, but you'll want to bring your own sleeping sheet or sleeping bag. Padlocks are provided and huts are secure. Communal washing and toilet facilities are simple.

Spanish Place (☎ 257311; huts Rs 70, d Rs 350; 📍) This chilled spot in the middle stretch of Kudle Beach has palm-thatch huts, and two lovely garden rooms with private shower but common 'toilet' (ie the bushes).

Namaste (☎ 257141; huts Rs 125, s with shared bathroom Rs 150, deluxe hut with private bathroom Rs 300; 📍) Namaste, on Om, is where the action's at during the high season. It's spotless and has a spacious restaurant/hangout that some travellers can muster no reason to leave.

Om Beach Resort (www.ombeachresort.com; s/d from US\$55/80; 📍) Many Om Beach regulars aren't happy about this new resort, which will likely have opened by the time you arrive. As resorts go, though, you couldn't find a better location. Accommodation is in cottages set back from the beach, and the focus is on Ayurvedic treatments.

Both Kudle and Om Beaches have several other options in the form of huts and rooms – shop around. Huts and basic restaurants open up on Half-Moon and Paradise Beaches in the high season.

GOKARNA

Most guesthouses in town offer discounts in the low season.

Shastri's Guest House (☎ 256220; dr_murti@rediffmail.com; Main St; r Rs 150) Shastri's has claustrophobic singles, but the doubles out back are big and sunny; some have balconies and palm-tree views, and all have a comforting 1950s-hospitality vibe.

Vaibhav Niwas (☎ 256714; s/d/tr Rs 100/120/300, r without bathroom Rs 100) This cosy, recently renovated place, off Main St, is bustling in the high season and placid in the off months. It has snug rooms and a Western restaurant.

Nimmu House (☎ 256730; nimmuhouse@sancharnet.in; r with/without bathroom from Rs 200/90, r with balcony Rs 700; 📍) Simple rooms set in relaxed green grounds near the beach.

Hotel Gokarna International (☎ 256622; fax 256848; Main St; s/d/tr from Rs 200/230/300; 📍) It has more class than character, but it's well organised and modern and all rooms have balcony and TV.

Several kind-hearted families around town have begun to rent out rooms. Our favourites:

Mama Shanta (☎ 256213; r with/without bathroom Rs 150/100; 📍 Oct-May) Tender loving care, just past Nimmu House.

Shanti Nivas (☎ 256983; s/d without bathroom Rs 100/150) Cosy, colourful rooms tucked away in the woods near the beach; bear right off the Kudle Beach path.

Eating

The chai shops on all of the beaches rustle up basic snacks and meals.

Prema Restaurant (meals Rs 20-60; 📍 8am-9pm) Beachfront Prema has excellent masala dosas (paper-thin lentil-flour pancakes stuffed with spiced vegetables; Rs 10) and thalis (traditional all-you-can-eat meals; Rs 30) along with traveller treats: coffee milkshakes, and yogurt with muesli and honey.

Mahalaxmi Restaurant (meals Rs 30-70; 📍 8am-10pm) Its menu was heavily inspired by Prema, but the spaghetti and tomato sauce – and the location, near the beach – are quite good.

Pai Restaurant (Main St; mains Rs 20-40; 📍 6.30am-9.30pm) Halfway along Main St, Pai is a friendly place with inspired vegetarian 'meals'.

Pai Hotel (Car St; mains Rs 15-30; 📍 6am-9.30pm) Around the corner on Car St, Pai Hotel is unrelated to the other Pai but also happens to churn out tasty thalis (Rs 15).

Namaste Café (meals Rs 30-80; 📍 7am-11pm) Om Beach's 'It' café serves OK Western stand-bys – pizzas and burgers – and some Israeli specials.

Getting There & Away BUS

From Gokarna's **bus stand** (☎ 256233), one bus daily heads to Margao (Rs 50, four hours) or you can go to Karwar (Rs 22, 1½ hours, three daily), which has connections to Goa. Direct buses run to Hubli (Rs 56, four hours, five daily), and a daily 6.45am bus goes direct to Mangalore (Rs 95, six hours), continuing on to Mysore (Rs 120, 14 hours). If you miss this, get an hourly local

bus to Kumta, 25km south, then one of the frequent Mangalore buses from there. Daily deluxe buses set off to Hospet for Hampi (Rs 120, 10 hours) at 7am and 2.30pm, and to Bangalore (Rs 298, 12 hours) at 7pm.

TRAIN

The Konkan Railway is the best way to reach Goa and Mangalore, among other destinations, though only two slow passenger trains stop at **Gokarna Rd train station** (☎ 279487), 9km from town. A 10.45am train heads to Margao (Rs 24, two hours); another leaves at 6.30pm (Rs 55, 1½ hours). For Mangalore (Rs 45, five hours), trains depart from Gokarna Rd at 4pm and 1.45am. Trains head to Kochi (sleeper Rs 281, 15 hours) on Saturday, Sunday and Tuesday; you must buy a sleeper ticket and upgrade, if you like, upon boarding. Many of the hotels and small travel agencies on Main St can book tickets.

Autorickshaws charge Rs 100 to take you out to the station, but buses go hourly (Rs 6) and to meet arriving passenger trains.

Several express trains stop at Ankola and Kumta stations, both about 25km from Gokarna and accessible by local bus.

JOG FALLS

☎ 08186 / pop 12,570

Jog Falls are the highest waterfalls in India, though the excitement of them is not in proportion to their height; the Linganamakki Dam further up the Sharavati River limits the water flow. The longest of the four falls is the Raja, which drops 293m.

The lush, spectacular countryside here, though, is perfect for gentle hiking. The bottom of the falls is accessible via the 1200-plus steps that start close to the bus stand; beware of leeches during the wet season.

Jog Falls' friendly **tourist office** (☎ 244747; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat) is located close to the bus stand.

Jog Falls has two inspection bungalows, usually reserved for VIPs. The **British Bungalow** (r Rs 60) sits atop the falls about 3km from the bus stand. Reserve with the **Siddapur Public Works Department** (☎ 08389-322103). The **PW Guesthouse** (per person Rs 250), across from the Karnataka State Tourism Development Corporation (KSTDC) hotel, is pretty fancy.

The **KSTDC Hotel Mayura Gerusoppa** (☎ 244 747; s/d Rs 200/300), about 150m from the car park, has enormous, musty rooms.

Stalls near the bus stand serve omelettes, thalis, noodles and rice dishes, plus hot and cold drinks. KSTDC's mediocre **restaurant** (meals Rs 20-40) is just next door.

Jog Falls has buses roughly every hour to Shimoga (Rs 45, three hours) and to Sagar (Rs 12, one hour), two a day to Siddapur (Rs 10, one hour) and three daily to Karwar via Kumta (Rs 38, three hours), where you can change for Gokarna (Rs 12, 45 minutes). There are two painfully slow daily buses to/from Mangalore (Rs 112, ten hours); you may be better off going via Shimoga.

The nearest train station is at Talguppa, between Sagar and Jog Falls. There's only one train daily, at 6pm, to Shimoga (Rs 28, three hours), on a romantically slow and scenic narrow-gauge line.

HAMPI

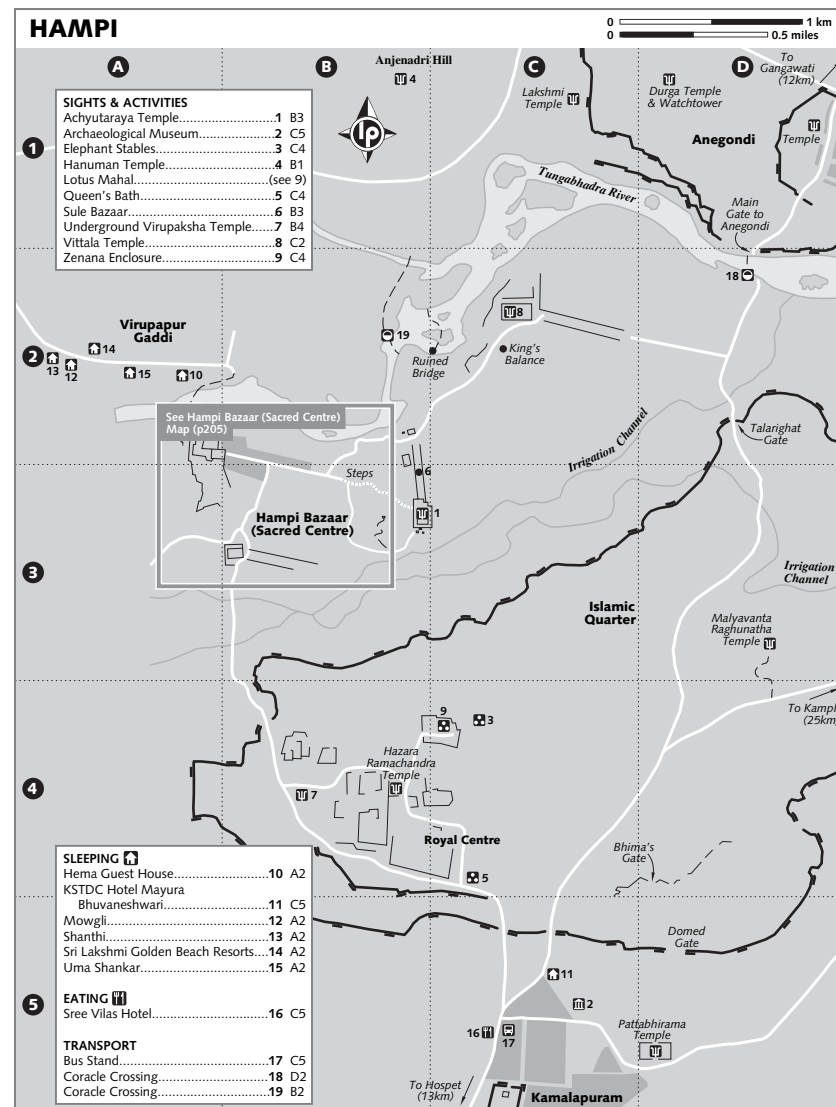
☎ 08394

The fascinating ruins of Vijayanagar, near Hampi, are set in a sublime boulder-strewn landscape that resonates with a magical air. Once the capital of one of the largest Hindu empires, Vijayanagar was founded by Telugu princes in 1336 and hit the peak of its power in the 16th century. With a population of about 500,000, the empire controlled the regional spice trade and cotton industry, and the city, surrounded by seven lines of fortification, covered 43 sq km. The bazaars were centres of commerce brimming with precious stones and merchants from far away. The empire came to an end in 1565 when the city was ransacked by a confederacy of Deccan sultanates.

The region is much less dramatic these days – in fact, time seems to stand still in the bubble of Hampi, and you can spend a surprisingly large amount of time just boulder-watching. It's a thriving centre for travellers, the kind of place to connect and reconnect with people, and visitors tend to stay a while. It is, however, possible to see the main sites in a day or two – by bicycle, moped or, if you start early, on foot – but this goes against the laid-back grain of Hampi. Signposting in some parts of the site is inadequate, but you can't really get lost.

Orientation

Hampi Bazaar and the village of Kamalapuram to the south are the two main points of entry to the ruins. The KSTDC hotel and



the museum are in Kamalapuram. The main travellers' scene is Hampi Bazaar, a village crammed with budget lodges, shops and restaurants, dominated by the Virupaksha Temple. The ruins themselves can be divided into two main areas: the Sacred Centre, around Hampi Bazaar; and the Royal Centre, to the south around Kamalapuram.

Information

Aspiration Stores (Map p205; ☎ 10am-1pm & 4-8pm) For books on the area, including *Hampi*, by John M Fritz and George Michell, which is a good architectural study.

Canara Bank (Map p205; ☎ 241243; ☎ 11am-2pm Mon, Tue & Thu-Sat) Changes travellers cheques and gives cash advances on credit cards. The numerous authorised moneychangers around offer slightly worse rates.

Sree Rama Cyber Cafe (Map p205; per hr Rs 60;

☎ 7am-11pm)

Tourist Office (Map p205; ☎ 241339; ☎ 10am-5.30pm Sat-Thu) Can arrange guides for Rs 500 per day.

Dangers & Annoyances

Hampi is a safe place, generally free of any aggression. That said, don't wander around the ruins at sunrise or sunset, particularly on the climb up Matanga Hill, and don't wander alone, as muggings and violence have been on the rise in recent years.

Foreigners should register at the **police station** (Map p205) inside the Virupaksha Temple upon arrival. This is a simple process, involving logging your details in a book – it's as routine as a hotel check-in. The station, which is just inside the temple entrance on the right, has a photo gallery of crooks.

Sights

HAMPI BAZAAR & VIRUPAKSHA TEMPLE

Now that locals are occupying the ancient buildings lining the main street, **Hampi Bazaar** (Map p205) is once more a bustling village. The **Virupaksha Temple** (Map p205; ☎ 2441241; admission Rs 2; ☎ sunrise-sunset), at the western end, is one of the city's oldest structures. The main **gopuram** (gateway tower), almost 50m high, was built in 1442, with a smaller one added in 1510. The main shrine is dedicated to Virupaksha, a form of Shiva.

If Lakshmi, the temple elephant, and her attendant are around, you can get a smooch (blessing) from her for a Rs 1 coin. The adorable Lakshmi gets her morning bath at 7.30am, just down the way by the river ghats.

To the south, overlooking Virupaksha Temple, **Hemakuta Hill** (Map p205) has a scattering of early ruins including Jain temples and a monolithic sculpture of Narasimha (Vishnu in his man-lion incarnation). It's worth the short walk up for the view over the bazaar.

VITTALA TEMPLE

From the eastern end of Hampi Bazaar a track, navigable only on foot, leads left to the **Vitala Temple** (Map p203; admission US\$5; ☎ 8am-6pm), about 2km away. The undisputed highlight of the Hampi ruins, the 16th-century Vittala Temple is a Unesco World Heritage site. It's in a good state of preservation, though purists may gasp at

the cement-block columns erected to keep the main structure from collapsing.

Work likely started on the temple during the reign of Krishnadevaraya (1509–29) and, despite the fact that it was never finished or consecrated, the temple's incredible sculptural work is the pinnacle of Vijayanagar art. The outer 'musical' pillars reverberate when tapped, although this is discouraged to avoid further damage. There's an ornate stone chariot in the temple courtyard containing an image of Garuda. Its wheels were once capable of turning.

Keep your temple entry ticket for same-day admission into the Zenana Enclosure and Elephant Stables in the Royal Centre (below).

SULE BAZAAR & ACHYUTARAYA TEMPLE

Halfway along the path from Hampi Bazaar to the Vittala Temple, a track to the right leads to deserted **Sule Bazaar** (Map p203), which gives you some idea of what Hampi Bazaar might have looked like if it hadn't been repopulated. At the southern end of this area is the **Achyutaraya Temple** (Map p203). Its isolated location at the foot of Matanga Hill makes it quietly atmospheric.

ROYAL CENTRE

This area of Hampi is quite different from the area around Hampi Bazaar, since most of the rounded boulders that once littered the site have been used to create a mind-boggling proliferation of beautiful stone walls. It's a 2km walk on a track from the Achyutaraya Temple, but most people get to it from the Hampi Bazaar–Kamalapuram road. This area is easily explored by bicycle since a decent dirt road runs through its heart.

Within various enclosures here are the rest of Hampi's major attractions, including the **Lotus Mahal** (Map p203) and the **Elephant Stables** (Map p203; admission US\$5; ☎ 8am-6pm). The former is a delicately designed pavilion in a walled compound known as the **Zenana Enclosure**. It's an amazing synthesis of Hindu and Islamic styles and gets its name from the lotus bud carved in the centre of the domed and vaulted ceiling. The Elephant Stables is a grand building with domed chambers, where the state elephants once resided. Your entry ticket to the Zenana Enclosure and stables

is valid for same-day admission to the Vittala Temple.

Further south, you'll find various temples and elaborate waterworks, including the **Underground Virupaksha Temple** (Map p203) and the impressive **Queen's Bath** (Map p203), which is deceptively plain on the outside.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM

The **archaeological museum** (Map p203; ☎ 241561; Kamalapuram; admission Rs 5; ☎ 10am-5pm Sat-Thu) has well-displayed collections of sculptures from local ruins, Neolithic tools, 16th-century weaponry and a large floor model of the Vijayanagar ruins.

ANEGONDI

North of the river is the ruined fortified stronghold of **Anegondi** (Map p203); much of the old defensive wall is intact. The unruffled area, amid paddy fields, makes for a good afternoon's ambling. There are numerous small temples worth a visit, including the whitewashed **Hanuman Temple** (Map p203; ☎ sunrise-sunset), which is perched

on top of a rocky hill. The climb is a fine undertaking, but not in the heat of the day. Fittingly, lots of cheeky monkeys roam about, so don't walk up wearing bananas.

To get to Anegondi take a coracle (small boat made of waterproof hides) across the river (Rs 20) and follow the dusty road north.

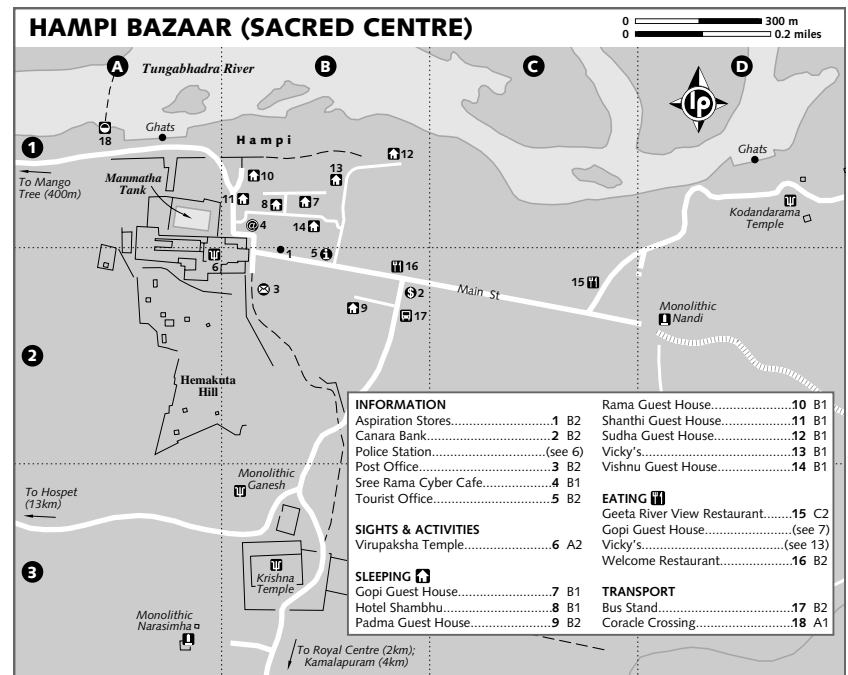
Sleeping

Listed rates are for the high season, but prices shoot up by 50% or more during the manic fortnight around New Year's Day, and drop just as dramatically in the low season (from April to September). Check-out is usually around 10am. Aside from the KSTDC hotel, rooms are quaint but basic; if you want a cushy abode, stay in Hospet.

HAMPI BAZAAR

Dozens of cute, basic lodges freckle the alleys leading off the main road.

Rama Guest House (Map p205; ☎ 241962; s Rs 250, d Rs 300-350) The kind owners here are very proud of their four rooms, recently redone with cheerful, garish floor tiles and new



bathrooms. Its rooftop restaurant does excellent food and is a nice place for a drink.

Shanthi Guest House (Map p205; ☎ 241568; s/d without bathroom Rs 180/250) The Shanthi is a Hampi tradition, with a peaceful courtyard, bike rental (Rs 30), morning bakery delivery and a small shop that runs on the honour system.

Vicky's (Map p205; ☎ 241694; vikkyhampi@yahoo.co.in; r Rs 400; ☎) The swing chair on the front porch is as comfy as Vicky's seven brightly painted rooms. The rooftop restaurant (opposite) has better views than most.

Hotel Shambhu (Map p205; ☎ 241383; angadi paramesh1@hotmail.com; r Rs 300) The rooms at this little guesthouse are small but sweet. Plus, they have lavender walls and are named after deities. The hallway has plants and an opalescent chandelier, and the rooftop restaurant isn't bad.

Gopi Guest House (Map p205; ☎ 241695; gopi.guesthouse93@yahoo.co.in; s/d Rs 300/400) Shiny new tiles and fresh paint make the rooms at Gopi sparkle. Comes with requisite roof garden and restaurant (opposite).

Padma Guest House (Map p205; ☎ 241331; hampi.padma2002@yahoo.co.in; d Rs 600-800, s/d without bathroom Rs 200/350) Padma's rooms are clean and cosy and feel like part of the family home. There's also a rooftop restaurant.

Other decent options:

Sudha Guest House (Map p205; ☎ 441451; s without bathroom Rs 150, d with bathroom Rs 250) Could be a lot cleaner, but there's a good family vibe and some doubles fit three.

Vishnu Guest House (Map p205; ☎ 441415; r from Rs 250) A family place exuding friendliness.

VIROPAPUR GADDI

The most laid-back scene is just north of the river in tranquil Virupapur Gaddi, and during the high season this is the place to be for parties after hours. Many travellers, though, find the isolation a little unnerving, and you should keep your wits about you after dark. To reach Virupapur Gaddi, take a coracle (Rs 5) from the ghats north of Virupaksha Temple. We've received complaints from readers about the coracle guys: be sure to return by nightfall or you may find yourself feeling uncomfortable and/or paying 20 times the standard fare. In the monsoon season, when the river is running high, boats may not be able to cross.

Shanthi (Map p203; ☎ 08533-287038; r without bathroom Rs 150, bungalows Rs 300) Shanthi's bungalows have paddy-field, river and sunset views and front porches with couch swings, while the restaurant, which does exceptional thalis (Rs 30) and pizzas (Rs 70 to 85), is in a quasi-treehouse.

Mowgli (Map p203; ☎ 08533-287033; mowgli96@hotmail.com; r without bathroom Rs 100, bungalows with bathroom Rs 350) Lush, shady gardens shelter hammocks and thatch-roof bungalows, some with sunset views.

Hema Guest House (Map p203; chemahome@yahoo.com; dm/bungalows Rs 50/300) This compound is highly advanced. Its little houses are shiny and new, with maximum-security screening, and the restaurant is in a lovely wooden belvedere with the best views in town.

Uma Shankar (Map p203; ☎ 08533-287067; r Rs d 200-450) This place is a little jewel run by a friendly, hard-working woman. The rooms, set amid pretty gardens, were recently renovated.

Sri Lakshmi Golden Beach Resorts (Map p203; ☎ 08533-287008; d Rs 150-350; ☎) The important thing here is the pool – a big one – that non-guests can use for Rs 50 per hour. Rooms are quite nice, as well, especially the Rs 200 circular cottages, which have circular beds.

KAMALAPURAM

KSTDC Hotel Mayura Bhuvaneshwari (Map p203; ☎ 241574; s with/without AC Rs 400/250, d Rs 450/300; ☎) On very quiet grounds, this place is modern and well maintained, and all rooms have solar-heated shower. There's a massage and yoga centre, and a bar-restaurant.

Eating

Most restaurants here serve vegetarian Indian and Western food catering to the traveller palate, but Hampi is not renowned for its cuisine. Due to Hampi's religious significance, alcohol is not permitted – though travellers have been known to (discreetly) bend the rules. For a respectable, legal drink, head for the bar at Hotel Mayura Bhuvaneshwari (above) in Kamalapuram.

Mango Tree (mains Rs 25-60; ☎ 7am-10pm) Even the walk out here is delicious: 400m west of the ghats down a path through a banana plantation. The thalis (Rs 30) are a treat, and the straw mats outside are ideal spots to laze with a book, while a swing hangs contentedly from the eponymous mango tree.

Geeta River View Restaurant (Map p205; mains Rs 25-45; ☎ 7am-10pm) This quiet outdoor spot on the river has great food; try the *pakodas* (rice-flour fritters, Rs 20) or the subtle cashew veg curry (Rs 35). The restaurant's at the start of the path leading to Vittala Temple.

Welcome Restaurant (Map p205; mains Rs 20-45; ☎ 7am-11pm) Along with offering all the usual suspects, the humble little Welcome makes a worthy attempt at *kim chi* (Korean relish, Rs 10)! The woman who runs the place is an old soul.

Kamalapuram has a few simple eateries, such as **Sree Vilas Hotel** (Map p203; meals Rs 16; ☎ 5am-8.30pm), opposite the bus stand.

Several of Hampi's lodges have good rooftop joints:

Gopi Guest House (Map p205; mains Rs 25-40; ☎ 6.30am-11pm) Serving espresso with milk (Rs 50) and 'Japanese' food – tomato don (Rs 30), for example – among lots of plants.

Vicky's (Map p205; mains Rs 20-45; ☎ 6.30am-10.30pm) Really good food, amazing views, purple tables and a family atmosphere.

Getting There & Away

While some buses from Goa and Bangalore will drop you in Hampi Bazaar, you have to go to Hospet to catch most buses out. The first bus from Hospet (Rs 5, 30 minutes, half-hourly) is at 6.30am; the last one back leaves Hampi Bazaar at 8.30pm. An autorickshaw costs Rs 80.

Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) has a daily Rajahamsa bus service between Hampi and Bangalore (Rs 204, nine hours) leaving Hampi at 8pm. The overnight sleeper bus to/from Goa (Rs 400), which runs during the high season, is a popular option – but don't expect a deep sleep. Solo travellers have to share a bunk. Numerous travel agents in Hampi Bazaar are eager to book onward bus, train and plane tickets or arrange a car and driver. See p208 for bus and train information for Hospet.

Getting Around

Once you've seen the Vittala and Achyutaraya Temples and Sule Bazaar, exploring the rest of the ruins by bicycle is the thing to do. There are key monuments haphazardly signposted along the road from Hampi Bazaar to Kamalapuram. Bicycles cost Rs 30 to 40 per day in Hampi Bazaar. Mopeds can be

hired for around Rs 200 plus petrol. You can take your bicycle (extra Rs 5), or motorcycle (extra Rs 10), across the river on a coracle.

Walking is the only way to see all the nooks and crannies, but expect to cover at least 7km just to see the major ruins. Autorickshaws and taxis are available for sightseeing, and will drop you as close to each of the major ruins as they can. A five-hour autorickshaw tour costs Rs 250.

Organised tours depart from Hospet; see below for details.

HOSPET

☎ 08394 / pop 163,284

Hospet is an active regional centre with none of Hampi's atmosphere, but you'll certainly swing through here to make transport connections. It has some good hotels, but otherwise there's no reason to linger. You might want to check out Tungabhadra Dam; it's 590m long and 49m high.

Information

College Rd has a few Internet joints with sluggish connections for Rs 40 per hour. The cloakroom at Hospet's bus stand holds bags for Rs 10 per day.

Andhra Bank (☎ 228249; ☎ 10.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-1.30pm Sat) Cash advances on Visa and MasterCard with a 1% commission. It's next to Hanuman Temple, off College Rd.

Hotel Malligi (☎ 228101; Jabunatha Rd) Changes travellers cheques.

KSTDC tourist office (☎ 228537; Shanbhag Circle; ☎ 7.30am-8.30pm)

State Bank of India (☎ 228576; Station Rd; ☎ 10.30am-4pm Mon-Fri) Changes currency; the ATM here sometimes accepts MasterCard.

Tours

KSTDC's Hampi tour (Rs 110) runs daily in the high season and on demand the rest of the year; it departs from the tourist office at 9.30am and returns at 5.30pm. It's in the lap of the gods whether you get an informative guide or one who rushes through the ruins. Book ahead in high season, but just show up other times as the tours won't run with fewer than 10 people.

Sleeping & Eating

Hotel Priyadarshini (☎ 228838; priyainnhampi@india.com; Station Rd; standard s/d without AC Rs 400/600, deluxe d without AC Rs 400/950, s/d with AC Rs 1300/1350; ☎)

Between the bus and train stations is this classy place with fresh, tidy rooms, all with balcony. Its nonveg restaurant (mains Rs 35 to 70), among trees and with sugarcane views, is worth a visit.

Hotel Malligi (☎ 228101; malligihome@hotmail.com; Jabunatha Rd; r Rs 300-2000; 📶 📺 📺) Rooms vary widely in the Malligi compound, from OK cheaper old-wing rooms to stylish modern rooms in the new wing. It has Internet facilities, various restaurants and a pool (Rs 25 for nonguests).

Waves (mains Rs 45-80; 🕒 6am-11pm) The delicious veg and nonveg offerings at Hotel Malligi's multicuisine restaurant make it a great place to feast.

Udupi Sri Krishna Bhavan (meals Rs 15-40; 🕒 6am-11pm) Opposite the bus stand, this clean, nononsense spot dishes out North and South Indian fare.

Getting There & Away

BUS

Hospet's **bus stand** (☎ 228802) is unusually chaotic. Buses to Hampi depart from bay No 10 every half-hour from around 6.30am (Rs 5, 30 minutes), with the last bus returning to Hospet at 8.30pm. Several express buses run to Bangalore (ordinary/deluxe Rs 123/197, nine hours) in morning and evening batches, and three overnight buses head to Panaji via Margao in Goa (Rs 150, 11 hours). Two buses a day go to Badami (Rs 75, six hours), or catch one of the many buses to Gadag (Rs 42, 2½ hours) and transfer. There are frequent buses to Hubli (Rs 58, 4½ hours) and Bijapur (Rs 90, six hours), four overnight services to Hyderabad (ordinary/deluxe

HOSPET ON FIRE

Hospet comes alive during the Shiite Muslim festival Muharram (February or March), which commemorates the martyrdom of Mohammed's grandson, Imam Hussain. Fire-walkers walk barefoot across the red-hot embers of a fire that's been burning all day and night. Virtually the whole town turns out to watch or take part and the excitement reaches fever pitch around midnight. The daytime preliminaries appear to be a bewildering hybrid of Muslim and Hindu ritual, and those who are scheduled to do the fire-walking must be physically restrained from losing control just before the event.

Rs 160/229, 10 hours) and one direct bus, at 9am, to Gokarna (Rs 150, 10 hours). For Mangalore or Hassan, take one of the many morning buses to Shimoga and change there.

TRAIN

Hospet's **train station** (☎ 228360) is a 20-minute walk or Rs 10 autorickshaw ride from the centre of town. The daily *Hampi Express* heads to Hubli at 7.45am (2nd class Rs 47, 3½ hours) and Bangalore at 8pm (sleeper/two-tier AC Rs 212/881, 10 hours), or go to Guntakal (Rs 42, 2½ hours) and catch a Bangalore-bound express there. Every Tuesday, Friday and Saturday, an 8.45am express heads to Vasco da Gama in Goa (sleeper/two-tier AC Rs 169/690, 9½ hours).

To get to Badami, catch a Hubli train to Gadag and change there.