

SOUTH INDIA · COMPLETE TRAVEL GUIDE

Karnataka

Palaces, coffee hills and ruined empires — Karnataka packs more variety into ten days than any other South Indian state.

BEST MONTHS	FROM AHMEDABAD	IDEAL DURATION	VEG & JAIN FOOD	GOOD FOR
October to February; Hampi and Badami are best November to February only	Direct flight Ahmedabad → Bengaluru, about 2 h	4–8 nights	Very easy — Udupi cuisine is pure-veg by tradition; Gujarati and Jain restaurants in Bengaluru and Mysuru	Families, senior parents, Jain pilgrims, history and heritage travellers

Karnataka is the state we recommend to families who have already done a Kerala or Goa trip and want something with more history and more altitude change. In one loop you get a modern IT city, a Wodeyar-era royal capital, the misty coffee hills of Coorg, and — for those with an extra few days — the ruined temple city of Hampi and the cave temples of Badami. It is a bigger, more spread-out state than Kerala, so drives are longer and the itinerary needs more planning, but the range of experience is much wider.

For Gujarati travellers the practical side works well. Bengaluru is a direct 2-hour flight from Ahmedabad with several daily departures, Udupi-style pure-vegetarian food is the default cuisine across the state rather than the exception, and Bengaluru and Mysuru both have proper Gujarati and Jain restaurants. Shravanabelagola, one of Jainism's most important pilgrimage sites, sits conveniently on the route between Hassan and Mysuru, which makes Karnataka a natural choice for Jain families as well.

What to see

Mysuru Palace

The Amba Vilas Palace, seat of the Wodeyar maharajas, lit up with close to 100,000 bulbs on Sundays and public holidays, 7–7:45 pm.

Coorg (Kodagu) coffee country

Misty hills around Madikeri, working coffee-and-spice estates, homestays run by Kodava families, and the Cauvery river's source at Talakaveri.

Hampi

The 14th–16th century ruins of the Vijayanagara empire spread across a boulder landscape on the Tungabhadra river — a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of India's most striking ancient sites.

Belur and Halebidu

Hoysala-dynasty temples with stone carving of a density and detail rarely matched anywhere in India — the Chennakeshava Temple at Belur and the Hoysaleswara Temple at Halebidu.

Dubare Elephant Camp and coracle rides

A forest-department elephant camp on the Cauvery near Coorg where you can watch mahouts bathe and feed the elephants, followed by a coracle ride on the river.

Shravanabelagola

One of the holiest Jain pilgrimage sites in India: the 57-foot monolithic statue of Bahubali (Gomateshwara) atop Vindhyagiri hill, reached by 614 rock-cut steps.

Badami, Aihole and Pattadakal

Rock-cut cave temples at Badami overlooking a sandstone lake, and two nearby UNESCO sites — Aihole's temple laboratory and Pattadakal's Chalukyan masterpieces.

Gokarna and Murudeshwar coast

A quieter alternative to Goa: Om Beach at Gokarna and the giant Shiva statue at Murudeshwar, best combined with Udupi as a separate coastal add-on.

Getting there from Ahmedabad

Fly: IndiGo, Air India and Air India Express fly Ahmedabad–Bengaluru non-stop, several times daily, about 2 hours. This is the right airport for every itinerary in this guide. Mangaluru (for the Gokarna/Udupi coast) and Hubballi (for Hampi/Badami) usually need one stop, typically via Bengaluru or Mumbai.

Train: Ahmedabad–Bengaluru direct trains take 30–34 hours (e.g. Karnataka Express route via Mumbai). Only worth it for travellers who prefer rail over flying and have the extra days.

Within Karnataka: a private car with driver is the norm outside Bengaluru city. State highways are generally good but two-lane; hill roads to Coorg and Chamundi Hills are winding. Average non-highway speed is 40–50 km/h, so budget accordingly.

Getting around. A private car with an English- and Hindi-speaking driver covers everything in this guide and is what we book for every group. Within Bengaluru city, traffic is heavy at most hours, so keep sightseeing there light and allow extra time to reach the airport. Auto-rickshaws are useful for short local hops in Mysuru and Hampi bazaar; Karnataka State Road Transport buses are reliable on the highways but impractical with luggage and elders.

When to go

SEASON	MONTHS	WHAT TO EXPECT
Peak	October – February	Pleasant everywhere: 20–28°C in Bengaluru and Mysuru, cooler in Coorg (12–24°C, sometimes down to 8°C at night in December). Best months for Hampi and Badami too, since the plains are dry and not yet hot.
Good	March, September	Warming up on the plains but still comfortable in Coorg. September has the tail end of the monsoon in Coorg — check for landslide advisories before travelling.

SEASON	MONTHS	WHAT TO EXPECT
Hot	April – May	Hampi and Badami turn punishing, often 38–42°C — best avoided for anyone with elderly travellers or young children. Bengaluru and Coorg stay bearable (28–33°C and 22–28°C respectively), so a Bengaluru–Mysuru–Coorg trip still works in summer.
Monsoon	June – September	Coorg gets heavy rain (it is one of India's wettest regions) with leeches on forest walks — carry salt or anti-leech socks if trekking. Hampi and Badami are largely dry-zone and see much less rain, so the heritage circuit is a reasonable monsoon option.

Permits, rules and packing

No permits are needed anywhere covered in this guide. Shravanabelagola and other Jain and Hindu temples ask for footwear to be removed before the climb or the sanctum, and modest dress is expected; men are sometimes asked to remove shirts at some Jain temples for the inner sanctum, which we flag in advance for anyone uncomfortable with it.

What to pack

- Light woollens for Coorg mornings and evenings (10–15°C, December–January)
- Comfortable walking shoes — Hampi's boulder terrain and Shravanabelagola's 614 steps both demand good grip
- Sun hat, sunscreen and a water bottle for Hampi and Badami, which have almost no shade
- A folding umbrella if travelling through Coorg in September or the shoulder season
- Socks for barefoot temple visits — stone floors at Belur, Halebidu and Shravanabelagola get very hot by midday
- Basic first-aid and motion-sickness tablets for the Coorg hill roads
- A padded jacket if visiting Coorg in peak winter, especially for early-morning excursions to Dubare or Talakaveri

Veg and Jain food

- Udupi cuisine — the pure-vegetarian tradition that gave North India the word 'Udupi restaurant' — is the everyday default across Karnataka, so even small-town dhabas and hotels handle vegetarian requests easily.
- Bengaluru and Mysuru both have well-established Gujarati and Jain restaurants (MTR, Vidyarthi Bhavan and several dedicated Gujarati thali places in Bengaluru); smaller towns like Madikeri and Hosapete rely on hotel kitchens instead.
- Coorg homestays cook Kodava cuisine, which is heavily meat- and pork-based; always confirm a pure-veg or Jain meal plan with the homestay at least a day ahead — most manage it well once warned, but it is not their default menu.

- Shravanabelagola is surrounded by Jain dharamshalas and simple vegetarian bhojanalayas that serve satvik, onion-garlic-free food — a good stop for strict Jain travellers even outside the temple visit itself.

What it costs

Indicative per-person costs on twin sharing for a 5–8 night trip including flights from Ahmedabad, private car, hotels, breakfast and dinner. Actual quotes depend on dates, hotel or homestay choice and group size; a group of 6+ brings the per-person car cost down noticeably given Karnataka's longer drives.

VALUE

₹28,000 – 34,000

3★ hotels and simple homestays, economy flights booked 6+ weeks ahead, shared coracle rides

COMFORT

₹38,000 – 50,000

4★ hotels, well-reviewed Coorg homestays or resorts with pool, flexible flight timings

PREMIUM

₹58,000 – 85,000

5★ properties (Radisson Blu Mysuru, Coorg coffee-estate luxury resorts, Evolve Back Kamalapura Palace near Hampi), private guide throughout

Where the money goes

- Mysuru Palace entry is modest (roughly ₹100 per adult, more for the audio guide) but the Dasara-season decorations and illumination push hotel rates up sharply in that week — book 2–3 months ahead if travelling around Dussehra.
- Coorg homestays run ₹4,000–8,000 per room per night for a comfortable double with meals; luxury coffee-estate resorts go well beyond ₹15,000.
- Hampi needs a local guide (₹1,200–1,800 for a half-day) and a hired auto-rickshaw or car for the day (₹1,000–1,500) since the ruins are spread across 25 sq km — walking the whole site is not realistic in summer heat.
- Coracle rides are a small but recurring cost: roughly ₹400–600 per boat (seats 3–4) at Dubare in Coorg, and a similar range for the river crossing to Anegundi at Hampi.

Travelling with parents and children

- Shravanabelagola's 614 steps are steep in the last stretch; a doli (four-bearer palanquin) can be booked on the spot or in advance for seniors and anyone with knee trouble, and is genuinely a good option rather than something to feel awkward about using.
- Avoid Hampi and Badami between April and June if travelling with elderly parents or young children — daytime temperatures regularly cross 40°C with almost no natural shade at the monument sites.
- Coorg's forest walks (including the route to some viewpoints near Talakaveri) can have leeches in the monsoon and just after it; anti-leech socks or a pinch of salt in a pouch handles this without fuss.
- Confirm pure-veg or Jain meals with Coorg homestays a day in advance — their everyday cooking is meat-heavy and they need notice to prepare a separate vegetarian kitchen setup.
- The Bengaluru–Mysuru Expressway has cut the drive to under 3 hours, but it is a high-speed toll road — keep young children buckled in and take the marked rest stops rather than stopping on the shoulder.

- If combining with a Kerala trip, Coorg connects naturally to Wayanad (about 3 hours from Madikeri) — ask us about a combined Karnataka–Kerala routing rather than treating them as two separate trips.

Questions families ask us

How difficult are the Shravanabelagola steps for senior parents?

It is 614 rock-cut steps up Vindhyagiri hill, taking a fit adult 30–40 minutes at an easy pace, with a few benches along the way. For anyone who cannot manage it, a doli — a palanquin carried by four bearers — can be arranged on the spot for roughly ₹1,500–2,500, or booked in advance through us for a group. Many of our older clients use the doli and are glad they came anyway; the statue and the hilltop views are worth the visit.

When should we avoid Hampi and Badami?

April to June. Both sites sit in a dry, rocky, largely shadeless landscape and daytime temperatures regularly cross 38–42°C in this period. November to February is ideal; October and March are workable with an early start to sightseeing and a rest through the early afternoon.

Is Coorg's monsoon a problem for a family trip?

It is heavy — Coorg is one of India's wettest regions in June to September — and forest walks can have leeches. Waterfalls and rivers are at their most dramatic in this season, and it is low season for prices, but we generally steer first-time visitors and families with young children towards October–February instead.

Can we combine Karnataka with Kerala in one trip?

Yes, and it is a common request. Coorg connects to Wayanad in about 3 hours, so a Bengaluru–Mysuru–Coorg–Wayanad–Munnar routing works well for a 10–12 night trip. Ask us for a combined Karnataka–Kerala itinerary rather than booking the two states separately, since the routing and car logistics differ from either standalone trip.

Is pure-veg and Jain food really easy to find outside the big cities?

Yes, more so than in most other South Indian states — Udupi-style pure-vegetarian food is the everyday default across Karnataka, not a special request. The one place that needs advance planning is Coorg, where homestay kitchens cook meat-heavy Kodava food by default and need a day's notice to prepare a separate vegetarian or Jain meal.

How long are the drives, realistically?

On the classic and short-break routes, nothing beyond 3 hours except the final Coorg–Bengaluru return leg (about 5.5–6 hours). The heritage route is longer: Bengaluru–Hampi is 6.5–7 hours and Badami–Hassan is about 6 hours, both are genuine full-day drives, and we schedule nothing else on those days. An overnight train between Bengaluru and Hosapete is a reasonable alternative to the Hampi drive if the group would rather not spend a full day in the car.

Classic Karnataka

The standard first-time route: a night in Bengaluru, two in royal Mysuru, three in the coffee hills of Coorg, looping back to Bengaluru to fly home. No drive longer than 3 hours except the final return leg.

6 nights / 7 days Route: **Bengaluru – Mysuru – Coorg – Bengaluru**

From **₹34,000** per person, indicative

Day

1

BENGALURU

Arrive in the Garden City

Morning flight from Ahmedabad lands in Bengaluru by late morning. After check-in, an easy afternoon at Lalbagh Botanical Garden and Cubbon Park, followed by the ISKCON temple in the evening. Bengaluru has excellent Gujarati and Jain restaurants if the group wants home-style food on arrival night.

Stay: **Bengaluru** · Meals: **Dinner**

Day

2

BENGALURU → MYSURU

Royal capital via Srirangapatna

Drive to Mysuru (145 km, about 3 hours on the Bengaluru–Mysuru Expressway) with a stop at Srirangapatna to see Tipu Sultan's summer palace and the Ranganathaswamy Temple. Check in, then climb Chamundi Hills in the evening for the temple and the view over the city. If it is a Sunday or public holiday, time the return to catch the Mysuru Palace illumination at 7 pm.

Stay: **Mysuru** · Meals: **Breakfast, Dinner**

Day

3

MYSURU

Palace and gardens

Morning visit to Amba Vilas Palace (open 10 am–5:30 pm) — allow 90 minutes for the interior and courtyard. Afternoon at Brindavan Gardens (18 km, 30 minutes) for the musical fountain show, usually 7–8 pm depending on season — check the current slot on arrival. Evening free for Devaraja Market and Mysuru Pak shopping.

Stay: **Mysuru** · Meals: **Breakfast, Dinner**

Day

4

MYSURU → COORG

Into the coffee hills

Drive to Madikeri (120 km, about 3 hours, climbing steadily in the last hour). Check into a homestay or resort, then visit Raja's Seat for the sunset — a small garden viewpoint that is the town's best-known spot. Coorg's cuisine leans heavily on pork and other meats, so confirm your pure-veg or Jain meal plan with the homestay a day in advance.

Stay: **Coorg (Madikeri)** · Meals: **Breakfast, Dinner**

Day
5

COORG

Elephants, coracles and the Golden Temple

Morning at Dubare Elephant Camp (40 km, 1 hour), where forest-department mahouts bathe and feed the elephants and visitors can help; a coracle ride on the Cauvery follows. Abbey Falls (8 km from town) on the way back. Afternoon drive to Namdroling Golden Temple at Bylakuppe (35 km, 1 hour), the large Tibetan monastery settlement with its striking gilded Buddha hall.

Stay: Coorg (Madikeri) · Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Day
6

COORG

Talakaveri and plantation walk

Morning excursion to Talakaveri (48 km, 1.5 hours), the symbolic source of the Cauvery river high in the Brahmagiri hills, with a short climb to the second viewpoint for those who are up to it. Afternoon at leisure on a coffee-and-spice estate walk with the homestay, or a visit to Omkareshwara Temple in Madikeri town.

Stay: Coorg (Madikeri) · Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Day
7

COORG → BENGALURU → AHMEDABAD

Drive back and fly home

Long travel day: leave Madikeri by 8 am for the drive back to Bengaluru (250 km, 5.5–6 hours with a lunch stop). Direct to the airport for an evening flight to Ahmedabad. Families who prefer not to rush can add an extra night in Bengaluru and fly out the next morning instead.

Stay: — · Meals: Breakfast

Included

- + Return Ahmedabad–Bengaluru flights
- + 6 nights in inspected 3★/4★ hotels and homestays
- + Private AC vehicle for the whole trip
- + Daily breakfast and veg dinner
- + Dubare Elephant Camp entry and coracle ride
- + Airport pickup and drop

Not included

- Lunches on sightseeing days
- Mysuru Palace and Chamundi Hills entry tickets
- Travel insurance
- GST 5%

STANDARD

₹34,000–40,000

Per person, twin sharing

PREMIUM

₹52,000–65,000

Per person, twin sharing

Per person on twin sharing, indicative for 2026, including flights at normal fares. Dussehra week in Mysuru (palace at its most decorated) runs 25–35% higher and needs booking 2–3 months ahead.

Heritage Karnataka

For families who want the history rather than just the hill station: the Vijayanagara ruins at Hampi, the cave temples of Badami, Hoysala stone-carving at Belur and Halebidu, the Jain pilgrimage at Shravanabelagola, and a finish in Mysuru. Long drives on two days — worth it for what the route covers.

7 nights / 8 days Route: **Bengaluru – Hampi – Badami – Belur/Halebidu – Shravanabelagola – Mysuru**

From **₹42,000** per person, indicative

Day

1

BENGALURU

Arrive

Land in Bengaluru and settle in. An easy first day: Lalbagh or Cubbon Park in the morning if the flight lands early, and an evening at leisure to rest before the longer drives ahead. This itinerary covers more ground than the classic route, so an early night helps.

Stay: **Bengaluru** · Meals: **Dinner**

Day

2

BENGALURU → HAMPI

To the ruined empire

Long drive to Hampi via Hosapete (350 km, about 6.5–7 hours with stops) — leave by 6:30 am. An overnight train (Hampi Express, Bengaluru to Hosapete, about 9 hours) is an alternative for families who would rather not do a full day's drive; ask us about the timing when booking. Evening at leisure by the Tungabhadra river.

Stay: **Hampi (Hosapete)** · Meals: **Breakfast, Dinner**

Day

3

HAMPI

Vijayanagara ruins

Full day among the ruins: the Virupaksha Temple, Vittala Temple with its stone chariot and musical pillars, the Royal Enclosure, Lotus Mahal and Elephant Stables, and Hemakuta Hill for sunset. A local guide and a hired auto-rickshaw are worthwhile — the sites are spread across 25 sq km. A short coracle ride across the Tungabhadra to Anegundi is a nice add-on for children.

Stay: **Hampi (Hosapete)** · Meals: **Breakfast, Dinner**

Day

4

HAMPI → BADAMI VIA AIHOLE & PATTADAKAL

Chalukyan heartland

Drive to Badami (140 km, about 3 hours) with stops at Aihole, often called a laboratory of early temple architecture with over 100 shrines, and Pattadakal, a UNESCO site where Chalukyan builders perfected both northern and southern temple styles side by side. Reach Badami by evening for the rock-cut cave temples overlooking Agastya Lake.

Stay: **Badami** · Meals: **Breakfast, Dinner**

Day
5

BADAMI → HASSAN (FOR BELUR/HALEBIDU)

South towards the Hoysalas

Another long drive day, this one via Hubballi (280 km, about 6 hours). Break the journey with a lunch stop in Hubballi. This is the price of covering four heritage sites in one trip — the classic and short-break itineraries avoid it entirely.

Stay: Hassan · Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Day
6

BELUR/HALEBIDU → SHRAVANABELAGOLA → MYSURU

Hoysala temples and the Jain pilgrimage

Morning at the Chennakeshava Temple in Belur and the Hoysaleswara Temple in Halebidu (16 km apart), both covered in stone carving of exceptional detail — allow at least an hour at each. Afternoon at Shravanabelagola: the 614 steps up Vindhyagiri hill to the 57-foot Bahubali statue are steep but manageable for most; a doli (palanquin carried by four bearers) can be arranged in advance for seniors or anyone who prefers not to climb, at roughly ₹1,500–2,500. Continue to Mysuru (90 km, 2 hours) by evening.

Stay: Mysuru · Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Day
7

MYSURU

Palace and city

Full day in Mysuru: Amba Vilas Palace in the morning, Chamundi Hills and Brindavan Gardens in the afternoon and evening. If the day falls on a Sunday or public holiday, plan the evening around the palace illumination at 7–7:45 pm.

Stay: Mysuru · Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Day
8

MYSURU → BENGALURU → AHMEDABAD

Drive to the airport and fly home

Drive to Bengaluru airport (145 km, about 3 hours on the expressway) for an afternoon or evening flight to Ahmedabad. Build in a buffer of at least an hour beyond the drive time for Bengaluru's city traffic near the airport approach.

Stay: — · Meals: Breakfast

Included

- + Return Ahmedabad–Bengaluru flights
- + 7 nights in inspected 3★/4★ hotels
- + Private AC vehicle for the whole trip
- + Daily breakfast and veg dinner
- + Local guide at Hampi for one day
- + Airport pickup and drop

Not included

- Lunches on sightseeing days
- Doli charges at Shravanabelagola
- Monument entry tickets (Hampi, Pattadakal are ticketed; most others are free)
- Travel insurance and GST 5%

STANDARD

₹42,000–50,000

PREMIUM

₹62,000–78,000

Per person, twin sharing

Per person, twin sharing

Per person on twin sharing, indicative for 2026, including flights. Two long drive days keep hotel costs lower than the classic route, but fuel and driver charges are higher — factor this in when comparing quotes.

Karnataka Short Break

A long-weekend version for working families or couples: one night in Bengaluru, one in Mysuru, two in Coorg. Covers the palace and the hills without the longer heritage detours.

4 nights / 5 days Route: **Bengaluru – Mysuru – Coorg** From **₹26,000** per person, indicative

Day

1

BENGALURU

Arrive

Land in Bengaluru, check in, and spend the afternoon at Lalbagh Botanical Garden and Cubbon Park. Dinner at one of Bengaluru's well-known Gujarati or Jain restaurants — Rajdhani and MTR's pure-veg outlets are both popular with our groups.

Stay: **Bengaluru** · Meals: **Dinner**

Day

2

BENGALURU → MYSURU

Palace city

Drive to Mysuru (145 km, about 3 hours) via Srirangapatna. Afternoon at Amba Vilas Palace and Chamundi Hills. If it is a Sunday or public holiday, stay on for the palace illumination at 7–7:45 pm before checking in.

Stay: **Mysuru** · Meals: **Breakfast, Dinner**

Day

3

MYSURU → COORG

Into the hills

Morning stop at Brindavan Gardens, then drive to Madikeri (120 km, about 3 hours). Afternoon at Raja's Seat and a walk through Madikeri town; Abbey Falls in the late afternoon.

Stay: **Coorg (Madikeri)** · Meals: **Breakfast, Dinner**

Day

4

COORG

Dubare and the Golden Temple

Morning at Dubare Elephant Camp for the elephant bathing and a coracle ride on the Cauvery. Afternoon visit to Namdroling Golden Temple at Bylakuppe, 35 km away — a striking contrast to the temples seen earlier in the trip.

Stay: **Coorg (Madikeri)** · Meals: **Breakfast, Dinner**

Day

5

COORG → BENGALURU → AHMEDABAD

Drive back and fly home

Leave Madikeri by 8 am for Bengaluru (250 km, 5.5–6 hours) and connect to an evening flight to Ahmedabad. This is the longest single drive of the trip — start early and keep it as the only thing planned for the day.

Stay: — · Meals: **Breakfast**

Included

- + Return Ahmedabad–Bengaluru flights
- + 4 nights in inspected 3★/4★ hotels and homestays
- + Private AC vehicle throughout
- + Daily breakfast and veg dinner
- + Dubare Elephant Camp entry and coracle ride

Not included

- Lunches
- Palace and Chamundi Hills entry tickets
- Travel insurance
- GST 5%

STANDARD

₹26,000–31,000

Per person, twin sharing

PREMIUM

₹40,000–50,000

Per person, twin sharing

Per person on twin sharing, indicative for 2026. Works best flying out and back on IndiGo or Air India's daytime Ahmedabad–Bengaluru non-stops.

Want this booked properly?

Send this PDF to us on WhatsApp with your dates and the number of travellers. Hotel names and a firm price within 24 hours.

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