

# INDIA BY THE COAST

AT 7,517 KILOMETRES, INDIA'S EXCEPTIONALLY LONG COASTLINE IS HOME TO COUNTLESS BEACHES, QUIANT FISHING VILLAGES, MAJESTIC ANIMALS, AND A HOST OF ADVENTURES.

**DIVYA BEHL** AND **VIKAS PLAKKOT** GIVE US A PEEK INTO THE WONDERS FROM GUJARAT TO WEST BENGAL.

The clear waters of Radhanagar beach on Havelock Island.

DINDIA PHOTOS/ALAMY

INDIA BY THE COAST

## GUJARAT

**WHAT TO GO FOR** The most incredible Navratri in India.

**KANDLA PORT  
IS THE MOST  
PROFITABLE PORT  
IN INDIA**

## Diu

The erstwhile Portuguese colony, an island off the coast of Gujarat, has wonderfully uncrowded beaches, stunning forts, and delicious food.

**WHEN** OCTOBER TO MARCH  
**FOR WHO** THE YOUNG AND THE ROMANTIC

An erstwhile Portuguese territory, Diu is connected by a lattice of bridges and ferries to Gujarat on the mainland. It has a distinct Mediterranean-meets-Kutch look where houses are painted sunshine yellow, creamy white and powder blue under a scorching sun and clear sky. With a Union Territory status, it is a refuge for travellers to get a real

drink as its neighbour is a dry state. Some call it Little Goa, and some call it Gujarat's Ibiza. But it's actually a charming and quiet island with clean beaches and delicious food. Wander at the old Portuguese churches and dine on fabulous seafood including rockfish, calamari and prawns.

### DO

► Rent a bike and drive to the quiet beaches of Goghla or Ngao and explore the Naida Caves.

► Plan a day trip to the Gir National Park to spot the endangered Asiatic lion from an open-roof jeep.

### STAY

► Azzaro Resort and Spa offers 40 rooms and suites, a bar, and a spa. [azzarodiu.com](http://azzarodiu.com)  
► Close to the Gir National Park, The Fern is an eco-friendly resort with two restaurants, a spa, and simply decorated cottages and villas that bring you closer to nature.



**FESTA DE DIU** A 75-day beach fest, Festa De Diu happens from December to February. You can stay in luxury tents, listen to live music, watch stand-up comedians, and try adventure sports during Asia's longest beach festival.

The Nagoa beach offers a plethora of water sports activities.

GETTYIMAGES

## Surat

For the love of solitaires and textiles.

**WHEN** ANY TIME OF THE YEAR  
**FOR WHO** FOR THOSE WHO LOVE FARSAN. THE CITY HAS INCREDIBLE GUJARATI SNACK LIBRARIES (READ STORES)

A colony of merchants, Surat was once known for its silk weaving and brocade fabrics. Even today, you can visit its bazaars and buy silk saris and embroideries. The city is also famous for its diamonds: Surat is the world's largest diamond processing cluster. A makeover is on the cards for the city to transform it into a smart city with automatic fare collection system, intelligent traffic control, solar street lighting, and a skywalk.

### DO

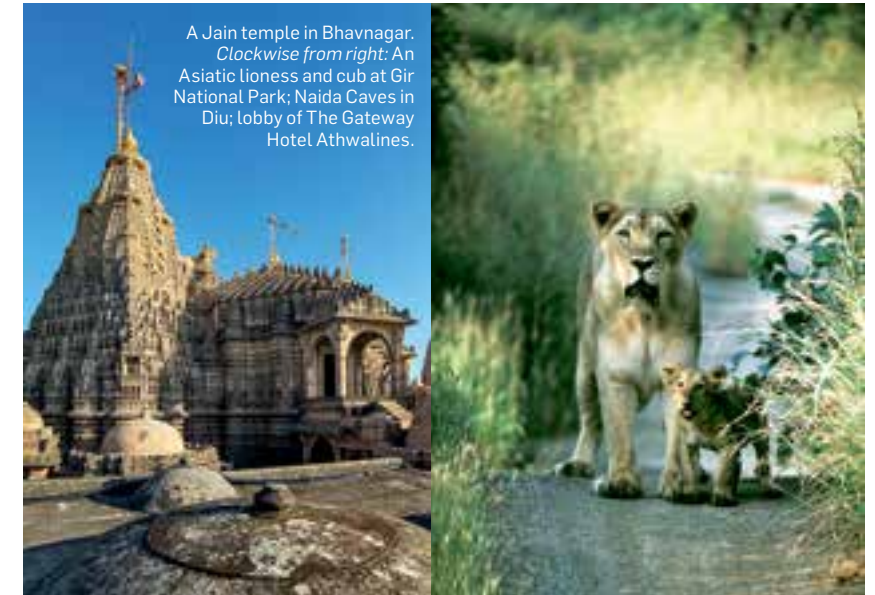
► Get spooked on the haunted Dumas Beach known for its unique black sand.  
► Download the Heritage Walk app and discover historic monuments, Hindu and Jain temples, and heritage homes in the city.

### STAY

► On the banks of Tapti, The Gateway Hotel Athwalines is a great option—the highlights include river-view Gateway Suite, multiple dining options, and a spa. [gateway.tajhotels.com](http://gateway.tajhotels.com)  
► Stay in one of the 170 rooms of The Grand Bhagwati which is designed for an urban traveller. [thegrandbhagwati.com](http://thegrandbhagwati.com)

**A SHOPPER'S PARADISE** Be it the souvenirs, the zari print sari, gemstones or textile fabric of any kind, the bazaars of Surat will trigger the shopping bug in everyone. Walk around the Ghod Dod Road to spot the top boutiques.

CLOCKWISE: ALIAKSANDR MAZURKEVICH/ALAMY; TRAVELGAME/GETTYIMAGES; GETTYIMAGES; COURTESY OF TAJHOTELS



A Jain temple in Bhavnagar. Clockwise from right: An Asiatic lioness and cub at Gir National Park; Naida Caves in Diu; lobby of The Gateway Hotel Athwalines.



## Bhavnagar

A coastal stopover for a wildlife adventure.

**WHEN** OCTOBER TO MARCH  
**FOR WHO** FAMILY, FRIENDS AND BIRD WATCHERS.

A historically important port city with trade links stretching to Africa, Bhavnagar is today one of Gujarat's largest cities. You'll find traces of Victorian history and a museum dedicated to Gandhi—he went to a university in Bhavnagar. It is the best place to base yourself if you're visiting the Blackbuck National Park.

### DO

► Climb up to the Shiva temple of Takhteshwar for a spectacular view of the Gulf of Cambay.  
► Take a boat ride to the privately-owned Piram Bet Island.

### STAY

► Book the Hazel Suite at The Fern Resort, Bhavnagar. The hotel also features a vegetarian restaurant and banqueting facilities. [fernhotels.com](http://fernhotels.com)

### GO BLACKBUCK SPOTTING

The golden grasslands of Blackbuck National Park, situated 47 kilometres from Bhavnagar, is home to the endangered species in addition to variety of birds and reptiles. Stay in luxurious lodges, take safari tours, and put your camera to work.

# MAHARASHTRA

**WHAT TO GO FOR** Some of the country's best organic farms, and Malvan cuisine.



A deserted beach on the Konkan coast in Maharashtra. Below: The Blue Ocean Resort & Spa.

**MUMBAI IS INDIA'S LARGEST PORT**



## Ratnagiri

For homestays, tranquility, and nature.

**WHEN** FEBRUARY TO MAY  
**FOR WHO** FAMILIES AND GOURMET TRAVELLERS

Located 335 kilometres from Mumbai, Ratnagiri has hills on one side and the Arabian Sea on the other. Close to town, there are undisturbed and underrated beaches such as Velas, Diveagar, and Guhagar that offer an insight into the Konkan lifestyle.

**DO**

- ▶ Home to the famous Alphonso mango, Ratnagiri is the perfect spot if you want to indulge in mango picking, and of course, eat them fresh from the tree.
- ▶ Try Konkan-style fish curry and balance its spicy flavours with *sol kadi*, a pink-coloured drink. Local snacks such as *ambapoli* and *phanaspoli* are must-try.

**STAY**

- ▶ Blue Ocean Resort & Spa offers a classic beach resort experience with comfortable rooms. [blueoceanresort.in](http://blueoceanresort.in)
- ▶ Set amidst coconut and mango plantations, Atithi Parinay Homestay is an example of Indian hospitality. Stay here for its traditional food and outstanding location. [atithiparinay.com](http://atithiparinay.com)

**VELAS TURTLE HATCHING FESTIVAL**

The endangered Olive Ridley baby turtles make their way from Velas Beach to the sea in the month of March every year. You can witness the hatching and their journey during this festival. [velasturtlefestival.com](http://velasturtlefestival.com)

SHOULTS/ALAMY; COURTESY OF BLUE OCEAN RESORT & SPA

## Malvan

To savour scrumptious coastal cuisine.

**WHEN** OCTOBER TO DECEMBER  
**FOR WHO** FAMILIES AND GOURMET TRAVELLERS

The small fishing town of Malvan has everything you want from a coastal holiday—beaches, water sports, medieval forts, and most importantly, excellent seafood.

**DO**

- ▶ Take a ferry from Malvan to the famous Sindhudurg Fort built by Chattrapathi Shivaji.
- ▶ Scuba dive or snorkel in the Malvan waters and experience under-water life of the Arabian sea.

**STAY**

- ▶ Stay with the Samant family in a cottage surrounded by spice, coconut, banana, and beetle nut plantation at Maachli. Go to a heritage village, learn the nuances of Konkani cuisine, take farming lessons, or simply appreciate nature at this eco-friendly homestay. [maachli.in](http://maachli.in)



### MALVAN CUISINE

The purest form of **Malvan cuisine** can be tasted in the homely restaurants that pop up on undiscovered palm-fringed beaches. The cuisine is heavily focused on non-vegetarian dishes and uses coconut milk and grated coconut.

**Malvan spices** make a great souvenir. Head to **Padave Malvani Masala Kendra** for the best blends for Malvan seafood dishes and curries. [+91/942-258-4783](tel:+919422584783)



COURTESY OF MAACHLI; DINODIA PHOTOS/ALAMY; COURTESY OF HOTEL MALVANI GAJALI



A cottage at the Maachli homestay. Below: The Sindhudurg Fort by the sea.



**Local Take** "Malvani cuisine is a wonderful example of the much talked about values of 'eat local' and 'head to tail' eating that are in vogue. Its tropical environment lends to the usage of banana and coconut in its seafood dishes that come packed with flavour."  
—Kalyan Karmakar Food blogger, [thefinelychopped.net](http://thefinelychopped.net)



## KARNATAKA

**WHAT TO GO FOR** Beach trekking, dolphin spotting, and scuba diving.

## Gokarna

For the hippie in you.

**WHEN** OCTOBER TO MARCH  
**FOR WHO** YOUNG, AND THE FOREVER-BOHEMIAN

A temple town till the late 90s, Gokarna is fast becoming the go-to beach destination for travellers who are looking for a quieter version of Goa. The Hindu pilgrim town, away from the coast, has ancient temples: the Dravidian-style Mahabaleshwar Temple, the Maha Ganapati Temple dedicated to Lord Ganesha, and Bhadrakali Temple, a shrine to Goddess Uma, the protector of Gokarna are the most popular sites.

### DO

- ▶ Complete one of India's only beach treks from Paradise Beach to Om Beach via Half-Moon beach and Kudle Beach, with *Thrillophilia*.
- ▶ Try adventure activities on Om Beach including jet-skiing and dolphin spotting.

### STAY

- ▶ SwaSwara Resort overlooks the Om Beach and it is one of the best wellness properties along the Konkan coast. [swaswara.com](http://swaswara.com)



### Local Take

**"Gokarna has a very special position, India's western coastline and western ghats together, hills and beaches next to each other. The beach trek is wonderful to get sweeping views of the ocean."**

—**Abhishek Daga**, Co-Founder, [Thrillophilia.com](http://Thrillophilia.com)



The Gateway Hotel offers views of the sea.

## Mangalore

To get a taste of India's best ice creams.

**WHEN** AUGUST TO DECEMBER  
**FOR WHO** FAMILIES AND OUTDOORSY COUPLES

A bustling coastal city and industrial town, Mangalore is well-known for its seafood fares. But, if you have an ice cream from popular brand Ideal, you're bound to come back again.

### DO

- ▶ Savour a Mangalorean seafood meal at Gajalee (*Circuit House Cmpnd, Vasanth Vihar, Kadri; +91-824/222-1900*), located in a charming British bungalow on a hilltop.
- ▶ Visit the Ashram Surf Retreat to learn surfing, wakeboarding, yoga, and kayaking. [surfingindia.net](http://surfingindia.net)

### STAY

- ▶ The Gateway Hotel Old Port Road has modern rooms that offer views of the river and the sea. [tajhotels.com](http://tajhotels.com)

**SINFUL ICE CREAMS** [Ideal Ice Cream has many branches in Mangalore but the one on the market road is considered India's largest. Its trademark 'Gadbad' ice cream with layers of strawberry jelly, kesar and vanilla flavours with dry fruits served in a tall glass is a must-have.](#)

## Murdeshwar

For India's best scuba diving.

**WHEN** NOVEMBER TO FEBRUARY  
**FOR WHO** DIVERS, AND BEACH LOVERS

Considered the best spot in India for scuba diving, Murdeshwar is an excellent base to explore quaint beaches, port towns, and temples.

### DO

- ▶ Take a day trip to India's largest waterfalls, Jog Falls, located two hours away.
- ▶ Drive to the tiny port of Honnavar to relax on the white-sand beaches and catch a performance of Yakshagana.

### STAY

- ▶ Mavalli Beach Heritage Home gives a bird's eye view of the sea, the river, and the famous Shiva statue. [mavallibeachheritage.com](http://mavallibeachheritage.com)

### GET CERTIFIED AS A SCUBA

**DIVER** [Join the two-day PADI Open Water Diver certification course with West Coast Adventures based in Murdeshwar.](#)  
[Already certified? Go for the advanced Dive Master course.](#)  
[westcoastadventures.in](http://westcoastadventures.in)



The statue of Lord Shiva at Murdeshwar Temple. *Below from left:* A Yakshagana artist; scuba diving in the Arabian sea.



ABOUT 90 BEACHES DOT KARNATAKA'S 320-KM COASTLINE.

The picturesque Kudle beach in Gokarna.

GUIZIOU FRANCK/GETTYIMAGES

CLOCKWISE: COURTESY OF TAJ HOTELS; SHUTTERSTOCK; MUTHURAMAN VAITHINATHAN/ALAMY

# KERALA

**WHAT TO GO FOR** To experience slow travel. And to eat delicious spicy mussels, clams, and oysters.



A fisherman working on Chinese nets in Fort Kochi. Below: An artist performing traditional dance form, Theyyam.

VASCO DA GAMA LANDED IN CALICUT IN 1498.

## Thalassery

For an amalgamation of Europe and Kerala.

**WHEN ALL YEAR ROUND**  
**FOR WHO SEAFOOD LOVERS, AND THE ROMANTICS**

A significant seaside town during the centuries of colonisation, Thalassery is the land of three Cs: Circus, Cakes, and Cricket as all these three found its entry to India, here.

**DO**  
► Drive your car onto the sands of Muzhappilangad drive-in beach, voted by BBC as one of the world's top six beaches.  
► Go hunting for speciality oysters all across the town, from the beach to the bus station.

**STAY**  
► Ayisha Manzil Homestay was built in 1900 in traditional Kerala style-architecture. The bungalow

has deluxe rooms, a pool overlooking the sea, and serves delicious Mopilah dishes. [ayishamanzil.com](http://ayishamanzil.com)

► SwaSwara Resort overlooks the Om Beach and it is one of the best wellness properties along the Konkan coast. [swaswara.com](http://swaswara.com)

**INDULGE IN KERALA'S BEST BIRYANI** [There's no better place to have the Thalassery biryani than at its namesake town. Hotel Paris, located in a tiny bylane in the centre of the town, does out the best fish biryani in the region. Arrive early during lunch time so you don't miss out.](#) [parispresidency.com](http://parispresidency.com)



SHUTTERSTOCK (2)

## Kochi

For the love of art.

**WHEN SEPTEMBER TO MARCH**  
**FOR WHO ART AND COASTAL HISTORY LOVERS**

When one ventures beyond its famed fishing nets, this harbour town unravels its lesser known artistic side, home to the Indian Banksy.

**DO**  
► Visit the oldest active Jewish synagogue among the 52 Commonwealth nations.  
► Attend the Nehru Boat Race, 60 kilometres from Kochi, along the backwaters of Alleppey in August-September.

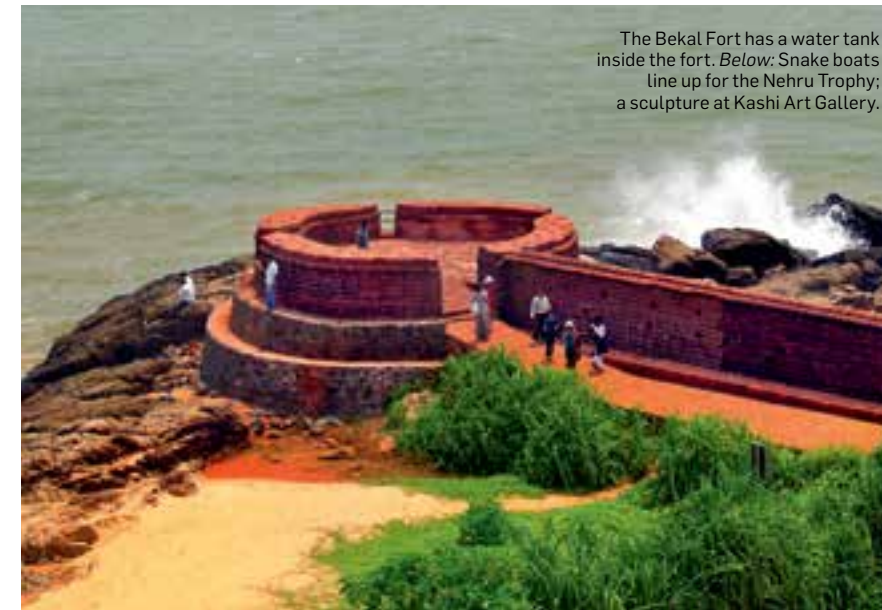
**STAY**  
► Vivanta By Taj Malabar is among Taj's most renowned properties in India, overlooking the Arabian Sea. [vivanta.tajhotels.com](http://vivanta.tajhotels.com)  
► Brunton Boatyard, Fort Kochi was built on the remains of a Victorian shipyard. You'll step into the annals of Kochi's history while staying here. [cghearth.com](http://cghearth.com)

FROM ABOVE: RBB/GETTYIMAGES; CR. SHELARE/GETTYIMAGES; KASHI ART GALLERY

### EXPERIENCE KOCHI'S ART SCENE

**Kashi Art Gallery, Fort Kochi** An airy garden cafe with unique art exhibits, a place to meet fellow artists. [kashiartgallery.com](http://kashiartgallery.com)

**Newcastle Art Gallery, Mattanchery** A well-curated collection of antiques from all across the world. [newcastlekochi.com](http://newcastlekochi.com)



The Bekal Fort has a water tank inside the fort. Below: Snake boats line up for the Nehru Trophy; a sculpture at Kashi Art Gallery.



## Kasaragod

For the best secluded beaches.

**WHEN MONSOONS**  
**FOR WHO PEOPLE WHO LOVE THE COASTAL TROPICAL VIBE**

Far from the maddening crowds, Kasargod is where one can experience Kerala in its raw beauty. From historic forts to untouched beaches, it's got it all.

**DO**  
► Relax with a book on the shores of secluded beaches like Kappil, Bekal, and Neeleshwar.  
► Visit Kerala's largest fort, Bekal Fort, where waves crash against the high fortified walls.

**STAY**  
► Neeleshwar Hermitage is an eco-wellness resort flanked by unobtrusive stretch of sand and serene backwaters. [neeleshwarhermitage.com](http://neeleshwarhermitage.com)  
► The LaLiT Resort and Spa, Bekal is an ideal choice. [thelalit.com](http://thelalit.com)

**DANCE OF THE GODS** [Kasargod is home to the 800-year-old ritual dance of Theyyam which is based on the belief that God enters mortal bodies. It is typically performed between October and May in ancestral homes and temples all around Kasargod.](#)

## TAMIL NADU

**WHAT TO GO FOR** The most colourful coastal experience in India.

TUTICORIN  
PORT DATES  
BACK TO THE  
SIXTH CENTURY.

## Puducherry

For history, sea, and coffee.

**WHEN NOVEMBER TO FEBRUARY**  
**FOR WHO PEOPLE WHO LOVE FRENCH**  
**COLONIAL CHARM**

The French colony of Puducherry is home to some of the most hip cafes in the country, undisturbed beaches, and the experiential township of Auroville.

**DO**

► Be it a film festival, coffee roasting class, water therapy, or yoga, the township of Auroville

has something for everyone.

► Take a walk around the only sea facing French quarters of Puducherry that reeks of its historical past.

**STAY**

► French architecture and luxurious setting of La Villa give a break from cookie-cutter stays. [lavillapondicherry.com](http://lavillapondicherry.com)  
► Stay at Temple Tree Retreat to be closer to all the action at Auroville. [templetreeretreat.com](http://templetreeretreat.com)

**Local Take**

"For a heritage experience, Earth Cafe located at Palais du Mahe, offers artisan hand-pulled espressos and home-baked cakes. Dreamer's Cafe in Auroville brews great South Indian coffees along with Italian affogato and healthy smoothies."

—**Marc Tormo** Local coffee artist and Founder, Marc's Cafe



Colourful houses, shops line the French Quarter.

DAVID SOUTH/ALAMY

## Pamban Island

For riveting history and offbeat adventure.

**WHEN NOVEMBER TO FEBRUARY**  
**FOR WHO PEOPLE WHO LOVE FRENCH**  
**COLONIAL CHARM**

Home of the late President Dr APJ Abdul Kalam and an important Hindu pilgrimage site, Pamban Island is today an adventure hot zone. It is a bridge away from mainland India, and a well-guarded secret. The Pamban train bridge is India's first sea bridge and the second longest, after Mumbai's sea link.

**DO**

► Take the train to the town and visit the revered Ramanathaswamy Temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva. On your way back from Pamban, try the road bridge.  
► Visit the abandoned town of Dhanushkodi that has remained desolated since the cyclone of 1954.

**STAY**

► Kathadi North will give you a unique homestay experience with lovely hosts who are experts at every outdoor adventure. [quest-asia.com](http://quest-asia.com)  
► A no-frills classic luxury hotel, Daiwik Hotel, Rameswaram features elegant rooms and a comfortable stay. [daiwikhotels.com](http://daiwikhotels.com)

COURTESY OF QUEST-ASIA (2)



### ADVENTURE GALORE

An upcoming sports and adventure travel company, **Quest Expeditions**, has it all: kitesurfing, windsurfing, sailing, kayaking and more. Besides one off experiences, they offer long-term courses in adventure activities as well. [quest-asia.com](http://quest-asia.com)

Water sports on Pamban Island.  
Below: Intricate paintings on pillars at a temple in Rameswaram.



## Mamallapuram

For the love of temples and adventure.

**WHEN ALL YEAR ROUND**  
**FOR WHO FAMILIES AND SURFERS**

The seaside town has a growing surf scene and new restaurants serving western food, but the main draw remains its world-heritage temples.

**DO**

► Go for a night safari at the crocodile bank, ride an ATV, or go fishing in deep sea in Mamallapuram.  
► Peek into the ancient Dravidian way of life at the museum village of Dakshinachitra.

**STAY**

► At Radisson Blu Resort, Temple Bay, you will wake up to the sound of the waves and the temple bells. [radissonblu.com](http://radissonblu.com)

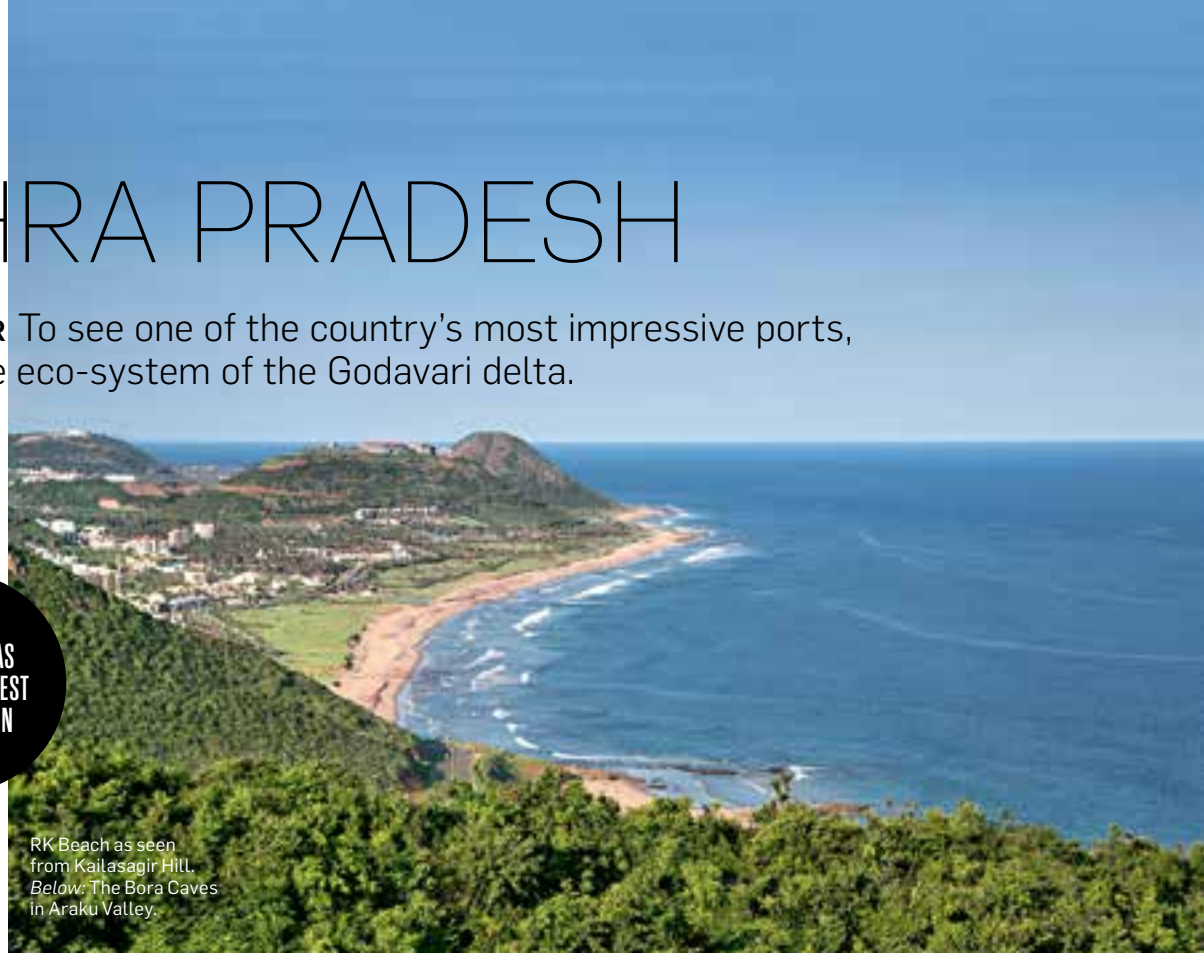
**AN ADVENTURE, ON FOOT**

[Exploration of this seventh century ancient town is done best on foot. Opt for a two-hour walking tour of the temples and come to grips with the Dravidian history. Book via \[viator.com\]\(http://viator.com\).](#)

# ANDHRA PRADESH

**WHAT TO GO FOR** To see one of the country's most impressive ports, and the unique eco-system of the Godavari delta.

ANDHRA PRADESH HAS SECOND LONGEST COASTLINE IN INDIA.



RK Beach as seen from Kailasagiri Hill. Below: The Bora Caves in Araku Valley.



## Vizag

A beachside metropolis experiencing a food revolution.

**WHEN** DURING VIZAG BEACH FESTIVAL IN FEBRUARY  
**FOR WHO** MARITIME ENTHUSIASTS AND FOODIES

One of India's oldest harbour towns replete with calm beaches is today an IT hub and home to leading restaurants serving international as well as coastal Andhra fares.

**DO**

- Satisfy your curiosity of being in a Russian submarine by visiting the Submarine Museum of Vizag.
- A three-hour drive from the city, the coffee plantations of Araku Valley will leave you spellbound with its picturesque scenery.

**STAY**

- Four Points by Sheraton Vizag offers warm hospitality and great South Indian cuisine. [starwoodhotels.com](http://starwoodhotels.com)
- Opt for a sea-facing executive suite at The Gateway Hotel Beach Road Visakhapatnam. [gateway.tajhotels.com](http://gateway.tajhotels.com)



### THE GRUB SPOTS

**Shack, The Park** Dine here for its beachfront location, fingerlicking sea food and creative cocktails. [theparkhotels.com](http://theparkhotels.com)

**Flying Spaghetti Monster** An Italian speciality restaurant serving excellent pastas, pizzas, and insalatas. [fsm.in](http://fsm.in)



**Local Take** "Vizag has come a long way when it comes to quality restaurants. Once, classic outlets like 'Raju Ghari Dhaba' were the only good food joints but today there are world-class restaurants like the Asian restaurant Mekong serving brilliant international food."  
—Ajay Restaurateur and Chef, Flying Spaghetti Monster

FROM ABOVE: KARAN TAKULIA (2); COURTESY OF THE PARK HOTELS



Little Egrets in Pulicat Lake.

## Nellore

An eco-tourism hub.

**WHEN** DECEMBER, WHEN THE SIBERIAN CRANES ARRIVE.  
**FOR WHO** ECO-TOURISTS AND BIRDWATCHERS

From white sandy beaches to freshwater lakes to small islands, Nellore district plays home to multiple water bodies and has pioneered eco-tourism in the state.

**DO**

- Visit the missile launch pad of Sriharikota and combine it with a visit to the famous lagoon of Pulicat that serves as a magnet for various birds that flock here from as far as Siberia.
- Fish, sail, or just sunbathe on the long stretch of clean and beautiful beaches of Nellore. Add Tupilipalem beach to the top of your list.

**STAY**

- Hotel Yesh Park is centrally-located with all basic amenities and comfortable rooms. [hotelyeshpark.com](http://hotelyeshpark.com)

**FOR BIRD LOVERS** The second largest brackish lake in India, Pulicat, is a blessing for serious birdwatchers. Birds like Flamingo, Pelicans, Grey Herons, and crocodiles crowd the sanctuary. One can go for bird safari tours, camp by the lake side, or engage in water sports.

FROM LEFT: SRINIVASA KRISHNAN/GETTYIMAGES; GETTYIMAGES

## Kakinada

To discover nature's best kept secrets.

**WHEN** NOVEMBER TO FEBRUARY  
**FOR WHO** PHOTOGRAPHERS AND BIRD WATCHERS

Nestled on the banks of the Godavari river, Kakinada is an industrial hot zone that has kept its heritage buildings, striking forests, and amazing water bodies away from the rust and dust of a cosmopolitan city.

**DO**

- Go for a sunrise jog along the soft sands of Uppada beach.
- Take a boat ride to the tadpole-shaped Hope Island and adore the beauty of mainland India.

**STAY**

- Run by the state tourism board, Haritha Beach Resort is a relatively-new beach resort with minimal facilities and basic service. [aptdc.gov.in](http://aptdc.gov.in)

- Two hours from the city, Dindi By The Godavari is a charming resort to use as a base to explore Kakinada. [dindibythegodavariresort.com](http://dindibythegodavariresort.com)

**A CAPTIVATING CRUISE IN AN UNASSUMING SPOT!** With more than 100 species of migratory birds and India's second largest mangrove spread, Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary is a precious gem that remains hidden from the tourist trail. Boat along the river flanked by mangroves or look for birds through your binoculars on a walk through the forests. It is only 18 kilometres from the port of Kakinada.



Sunrise on a beach in Kakinada.

## ODISHA

**WHAT TO GO FOR** To see the incredible work of turtle conservationists and historic sea towns.



COASTAL  
LENGTH  
480 KMS

Paintings adorn houses in Raghurajpur.

## Puri

Surf's up in a historic town.

**WHEN** DURING THE PURI BEACH FESTIVAL, USUALLY IN NOVEMBER  
**FOR WHO** FAMILIES, CULTURE VILTURES, AND SURFERS

The holy town, well renowned for its stunning temples and religious festivals, is also a bucket-list destination for surfers.

## DO

- Camp on the empty beach of Ramchandi, learn to surf, or to perform 'yoga on water.'
- Visit the heritage village of Raghurajpur where the heritage craft of *Pattachitra*—cloth-based scroll painting—is kept alive by local artists.

## STAY

- Pramod Convention & Beach Resort is a beachfront property with modern rooms. [pramodresorts.com](http://pramodresorts.com)
- Mayfair Heritage is a beach-facing luxury resort built in the classic Odisha style. [mayfairhotels.com](http://mayfairhotels.com)

**A FESTIVAL LIKE NO OTHER**  
[In November, the scenic stretch of sand on Puri-Konark Marine Drive beach will play host to the fifth edition of India Surf Festival. Join surfers from across six countries for the festivities that will include fantastic music, world films, and spectacular art apart from catching waves on your surfboard. \[facebook.com/IndiaSurfFestival\]\(https://facebook.com/IndiaSurfFestival\)](#)

## Paradip

For the wildlife enthusiasts.

**WHEN** MID OCTOBER TO MID FEBRUARY  
**FOR WHO** WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHERS

A major seaport town and an excellent spot for experienced surfers, Paradip is a gateway to some of the most intimate animal encounters in the country.

## DO

- Sunbathe on the pristine and quiet Paradip beach surrounded by tropical forests, or go surfing if you're a pro.
- Gulp down the popular Paradip Lassi (or, Gaveskar Lassi) from Badapadia.

## STAY

- Empires Hotel is a business hotel five minutes from the beach with spacious suites and rooms. [empireshotel.com](http://empireshotel.com)



CROCODILES TO  
TURTLES, IT'S GOT ALL!

Within 100 kilometres of Paradip lie the protected areas of **Bhitarkanika National Park** and **Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary**. While the former is home to many white crocodiles, the latter is where Olive Ridley Turtles come in large numbers to nest.



## Gopalpur

For those who prefer the laidback life.

**WHEN** NOVEMBER TO MARCH  
**FOR WHO** BEACH LOVERS AND FAMILIES

A quiet seaside beach town that woke up in the 1980s and has been converted into a resort town, replete with water sports.

## DO

- Climb up to the lighthouse to absorb 360 degree views of the beach.
- Shop for handwoven tussar silk textiles and decadent pickles in the nearby town of Berhampur.

## STAY

- Enjoy panoramic views of the sea at Mayfair Palm Beach Resort. [mayfairhotels.com](http://mayfairhotels.com)

**MORE THAN JUST A BEACH!**  
[Set up in 1996, the beach festival in Gopalpur held every December is a wonderful showcase of Odia classical music and folk dance. Many water sports are also held at this time on the beach, making it a perfect spot for a winter holiday.](#)

FROM ABOVE: SUBHENDU SARKAR/GETTYIMAGES; BRIAN OVERCAST/ALAMY

FROM ABOVE: MAJORITY WORLD/GETTYIMAGES; DINODIA PHOTOS/ALAMY

## WEST BENGAL

**WHAT TO GO FOR** The world's most unique mangrove eco-system and culturally rich delta.



The mangrove forests of Sundarbans.  
Below: A *Pattachitra* painter in Midnapore.

HALDIA IS  
THE OLDEST  
RIVER PORT  
IN INDIA.

## Midnapore

For the beach bums.

**WHEN** DURING KALI PUJA IN NOVEMBER  
**FOR WHO** EXPLORERS AND FAMILIES

The southern region of the Midnapore district has an array of pristine and unadulterated beaches of West Bengal, making the coastline a perfect getaway from the city noise.

## DO

- Tajpur beach, a little off the populous beaches, offers adventure activities like kayaking, parasailing, snorkelling, biking, and water zorbing.
- Unique to Midnapore region, *Rath Yatra* (women pull the chariot of the goddess) and *Kali Puja* are festivals worth experiencing.

## STAY

- Victoria Beach Resort is located at Mandarmani beach and offers luxury rooms and provides excellent service. [victoriabeachresort.in](http://victoriabeachresort.in)

**THE FESTIVAL OF 'POT MAYA'** [A tiny village of \*patuas\* \(painters\) called Naya, celebrates the festival of 'Pot Maya' in the month of November. The last 80 families of \*patuas\* get together to sing, dance, and paint ancient tales on long cloth scrolls, making it a sight to behold.](#)

## Sundarbans

For the love of nature.

**WHEN** NOVEMBER TO MARCH  
**FOR WHO** CONSERVATIONISTS AND TIGER-LOVERS

A UNESCO World Heritage Site, it is the land of the man-eating tiger, home to the largest mangrove forest in the world, and a unique species of river dolphins.

## DO

- Explore the mangroves of Sundarbans on a luxury cruise operated by Vivada as it sails through every nook and cranny of the forest. [vivadacruises.com](http://vivadacruises.com)
- Head to the isolated beach of Bakkhali, located at a distance of 138 kilometres off Sundarbans. Exclusive pirate parties at Bakkhali are run by [crossindia.in](http://crossindia.in).

## STAY

- Sundarban Tiger Camp is situated in the national park. This handcrafted camp allows you to experience the jungle in an untouched, unembellished way. [waxpolhotels.com](http://waxpolhotels.com)

**CATCH A PERFORMANCE OF BONOBIBI PALAGAAN** [A unique cult goddess of the people of Sundarban, Bonobibi refers to the 'lady of the forest' who is worshipped equally by both, Muslims and Hindus. Catch a secular musical drama performed by the locals as they beg the goddess to keep death away.](#)

## TOP BEACHES

**Talsari Beach**, accessible via a boat, is a quiet beach with red crabs strolling on its sands.

**Mandarmani Beach** is one of the only two motorable beaches in India and a paradise for photographers owing to its stunning sunsets.

