

INDIA

— Andamans · Karnataka · Maharashtra · Hyderabad · Kolkata · South road trip

“Turquoise water and temple bells, from beaches to mountain passes, across a continent of contrasts.”

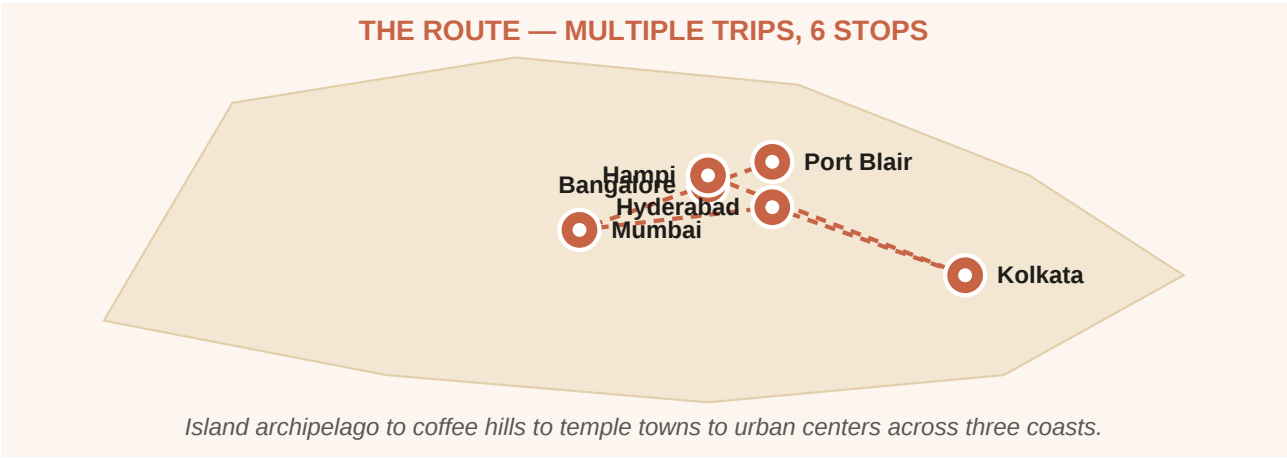


desk2destinations.com · Honesty over hype. Slow over rushed. Practical over pretty.

By Ayushi & Harshit Jain

India at a glance

India across six regions: quiet island backwaters, coffee plantations and palaces, monsoon ghats and biryani cities, and a 13-day family road trip through Jain temples and boulder kingdoms.



Best time	October to March (post-monsoon, cooler weather)
Visa (IN)	Indian passport — n/a; foreign visitors need e-visa
Currency	INR (₹)
Getting around	Flights between regions, road trips within
If we did it again	None mentioned — each region adds layers.

The top 10 — our personal highlights

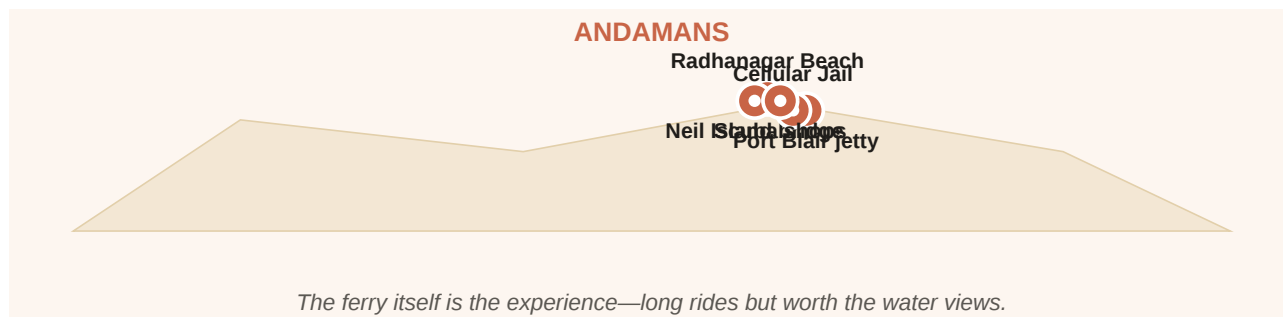
Ten moments worth flying back for. Ranked roughly in the order they made us go “oh.”

- 1 Cellular Jail and Radhanagar Beach** · [Andamans](#)
Heavy history and turquoise water—Havelock's beach and Port Blair's fortress.
- 2 Mysore Palace and Chamundi Hills** · [Karnataka](#)
Indo-Saracenic grandeur lit with 97,000 bulbs on Sundays.
- 3 Abbey Falls and coffee plantations** · [Karnataka](#)
Coorg's misty mornings and pepper vines climbing shade trees.
- 4 Hampi ruins and boulder kingdom** · [Karnataka](#)
26 square kilometers of 16th-century empire still telling its story.
- 5 Ajanta-Ellora caves** · [Maharashtra](#)
Ancient Buddhist, Hindu, and Jain carving spanning centuries.
- 6 Charminar and Irani chai** · [Hyderabad](#)
Old city lanes and biryani at its disputed source.
- 7 Golconda Fort** · [Hyderabad](#)
Nizami history and sound-and-light shows over ramparts.
- 8 College Street book bazaar** · [Kolkata](#)
Stall after stall deeper into lanes—bigger than Delhi's.
- 9 KC Das rosogolla** · [Kolkata](#)
The original spongy sweet, warm syrup, clean cardamom finish.
- 10 Shravanabelagola Bahubali** · [South road trip](#)
57-foot monolith on Vindhyagiri Hill—614 barefoot steps, 981 CE, silence at the top.

Andamans

Turquoise water, Cellular Jail, ferry logistics.

India's quiet superpower—empty beaches, heavy history, and multi-day ferry planning. Port Blair's Cellular Jail meets Havelock's Radhanagar Beach and Neil Island's natural bridges.



Top 5 here

- **Cellular Jail, Port Blair** — 1857 uprising prison; light-and-sound shows nightly.
- **Radhanagar Beach, Havelock** — Long, clean sand and surprisingly few tourists for Sundays.
- **Neil Island natural bridge** — Flat boat ride to Bharatpur Beach and limestone arches.
- **Scuba in turquoise water** — Trusted operators and tropical fish schools.
- **Ferry days on Makruzz and Green Ocean** — 10-hour rides between islands—plan around timings, not the other way.

Days 4-5 days minimum (2 nights Port Blair, 2 Havelock/Neil).

Where we stayed Mix of budget stays and eco-lodges. Pack layers for ferry winds.

Getting around Ferries connect islands; pre-book during peaks.

Where we ate Vegetarian options in hotels; fish is fresh everywhere.

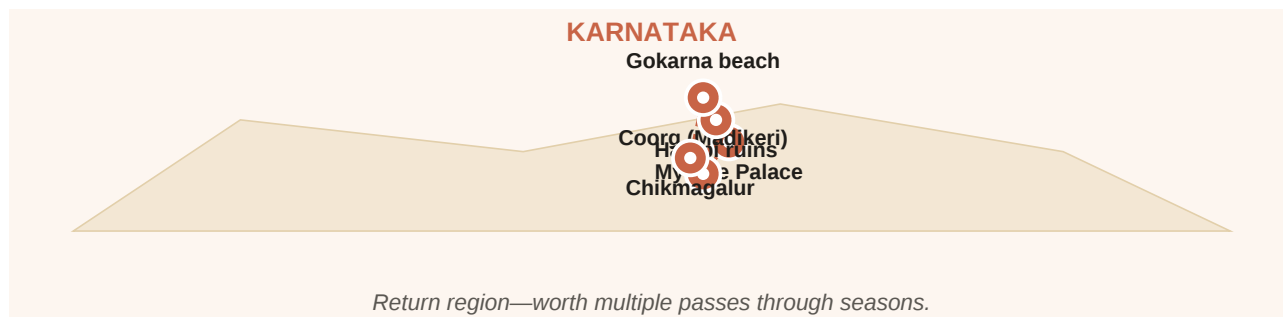
Reality check Ferries delay for weather. Bring seasickness meds. Island food costs more.

→ Read the full Andamans guide on the site: desk2destinations.com/india-andamans.html

Karnataka

Coffee hills, palace grandeur, boulder ruins, coastal stretch.

Bangalore as launchpad for repeated returns. Mysore's palaces, Coorg's misty plantations, Hampi's surreal landscape, and the Karnataka coastline slow-rolling south to Gokarna.



Return region—worth multiple passes through seasons.

Top 5 here

- **Mysore Palace** — Indo-Saracenic masterpiece; lit Sundays unforgettable.
- **Coorg coffee plantations and Abbey Falls** — Pepper vines, plantation walks, cool hill air.
- **Hampi ruins and boulder fields** — Virupaksha Temple, Vittala's stone chariot, Hemakuta sunsets.
- **Chikmagalur coffee trails** — Lesser-known than Coorg; peaceful homestays.
- **Gokarna beaches and Mahabaleshwar Temple** — Kudle Beach at sunset, Mahabaleshwar temple darshan.

Days	5-7 days to cover main stops without rushing.
Where we stayed	Bangalore for city base; homestays in Coorg; budget guesthouses in Hampi.
Getting around	3-4 hour drives between major towns; roads scenic but winding.
Where we ate	Akki roti, bamboo shoot curries in Coorg; thalis everywhere.
Reality check	Hampi gets touristy; early morning or evening exploration better. Coorg has variable WiFi.

→ Read the full Karnataka guide on the site: desk2destinations.com/india-karnataka.html

Maharashtra

Coastal city, monsoon hills, ancient caves, Konkan drive.

We've called Maharashtra home—Mumbai coastline, monsoon weekends in hill stations, Ajanta-Ellora cave pilgrimages, and the slow Konkan coast south toward Goa.



Top 5 here

- **South Bombay walks and Marine Drive** — Fort architecture, promenade sunsets.
- **Lonavala and Mahabaleshwar** — Monsoon retreats; mist-wrapped cliffs.
- **Ajanta and Ellora caves** — From Aurangabad—Buddhist, Hindu, Jain carving heritage.
- **Pune weekend itineraries** — Tech hub with café culture; easy Goa bridge.
- **Konkan coast drive** — Slow coastal scenery; lesser-known beaches.

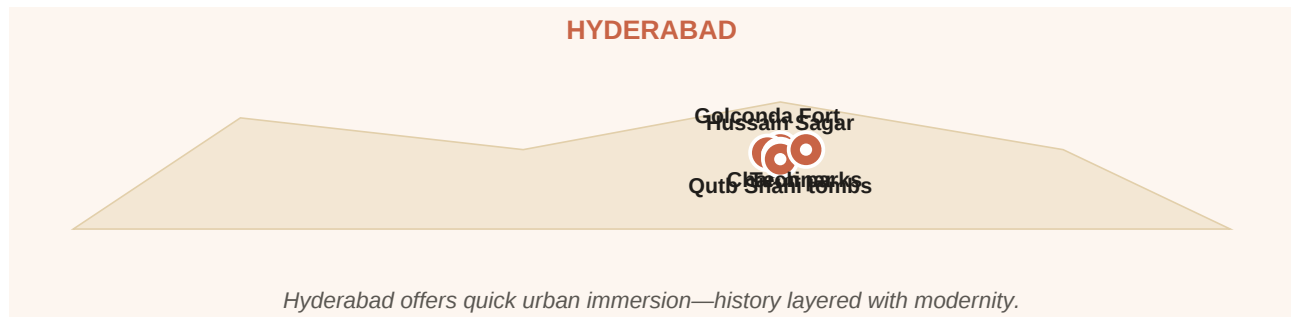
Days	4-6 days to hit coast, hills, and caves without rush.
Where we stayed	Mumbai luxury to Lonavala home-stays; cave-town guesthouses.
Getting around	Mumbai-Pune highway; scenic Konkan roads slower but worth it.
Where we ate	Vada pav in Mumbai; local Konkan fish; vegetarian thalis standard.
Reality check	Mumbai crowded; Konkan roads narrow and slow in monsoon.

→ Read the full Maharashtra guide on the site: desk2destinations.com/india-maharashtra.html

Hyderabad

Old city lanes, biryani, glass temples, tech parks.

Nizami history meets modern glass towers. Charminar's bazaar, Golconda Fort's ramparts, biryani debates, and the Buddha statue on Hussain Sagar.



Top 5 here

- **Charminar and Laad Bazaar** — Historic four-minareted landmark; bangle lanes nearby.
- **Golconda Fort sound-and-light show** — Nizami-era fortification with nightly performances.
- **Qutb Shahi tombs** — Quiet, elegant architecture in gardens.
- **Hussain Sagar and Buddha statue** — Lake overlook; boat rides at sunset.
- **Irani chai and Hyderabadi biryani** — Street food authenticity; the city's soul food.

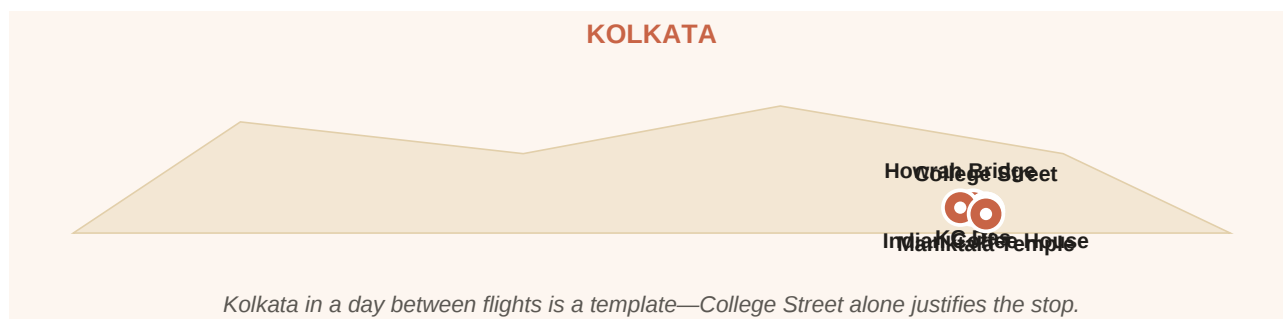
Days	2-3 days to hit main landmarks.
Where we stayed	Mix of budget hotels and upscale near Old City.
Getting around	Auto-rickshaws and taxis; metro growing.
Where we ate	Biryani (rice-meat dish), kebabs, sweet haleem; vegetarian options exist but secondary.
Reality check	Old city can feel cramped; Ramoji Film City day-trip far but touristy.

→ Read the full Hyderabad guide on the site: desk2destinations.com/india-telangana-hyderabad.html

Kolkata

Book bazaars, rosogolla, Howrah Bridge, college-town charm.

A solo day-trip turned into Kolkata discovery—KC Das rosogolla, College Street's book bazaar bigger than Delhi's, Indian Coffee House's butter toast, Howrah Bridge from the water, and the glass-inlaid Shantinath Temple at Maniktala.



Top 5 here

- 📍 **KC Das rosogolla** — Original spongy sweet from the counter.
- 📍 **College Street book market** — Deeper lanes, text stacks, second-hand novels.
- 📍 **Indian Coffee House** — Marble tables, turbaned waiters, 70-year cafe history.
- 📍 **Howrah Bridge jetty rides** — Cross the Hooghly for bridge views from the water.
- 📍 **Shantinath Jain Temple, Maniktala** — 1867 mirror-and-glass interior; Belgian chandeliers.

Days	1 day minimum if flying in/out; 2-3 for deeper explore.
Where we stayed	Budget to mid-range near Park Street or downtown.
Getting around	Metro reliable; buses unpredictable for outsiders.
Where we ate	Sandesh sweets, Girish Chandra Dey shop; veg rolls at Arsanal.
Reality check	Solo travel eating can feel lonely. Buses chaotic. Kolkata rewards meandering.

→ Read the full Kolkata guide on the site: desk2destinations.com/india-westbengal-kolkata.html

South India Road Trip 2025

13 days: Malvan to Pune, Jain temples first, family in a Polo.

December 2025 family road trip—13 days, one Volkswagen Polo, parents in the back. Malvan beach, Gokarna temples, Coorg coffee, Shravanabelagola's 57-foot Bahubali, Hampi ruins, Kolhapur's biryani. Jain dharamshalas as home base.



Top 5 here

- **Tarkarli Beach and Sindhudurg Fort** — Malvan coastal charm; boatman-guide to Shivaji's island.
- **Kere Basadi lake temple** — Varanga—12th-century temple in the middle of a lake.
- **Abbey Falls and Coorg plantations** — Coffee walks, monastery visits, akki roti.
- **Shravanabelagola Bahubali** — Morning climb, 614 steps, silence at the summit.
- **Hampi Virupaksha and Vittala Temples** — Empire ruins, stone chariot, Hemakuta sunset.

Days	13 days felt right; 10 days too rushed.
Where we stayed	Jain dharamshalas (book ahead, not on booking sites); vegetarian bhojanalas.
Getting around	Self-driven Polo; Konkan coast to Karnataka climbs, then flat approaches.
Where we ate	Pure vegetarian entire trip; thalis unlimited and cheap.
Reality check	Dharamshalas humble but clean. Family travel needs more flexibility than solo. Fifth person (blue suitcase) makes Polo tight.

→ Read the full South India Road Trip 2025 guide on the site: desk2destinations.com/india-southroadtrip-2025.html

Costs — where the rupees went

Mid-range, vegetarian-friendly, two travellers splitting stays. Numbers are per-person, rounded honestly. Flights vary the most.

Accommodation	Jain dharamshalas vs hotels—dorms	500-1500	1000 INR/night average
Food	Vegetarian across all regions; thalis, street food, minimal dining out		300-600 INR/day
Transport	Flights between regions, petrol for road trips in Polo		3000-8000 INR segment
Attractions	Temples free or nominal; forts 200-500 INR each		500 INR/day
Ferry costs	Andamans inter-island ferries essential		2000-3000 INR total
Coffee plantation walks	Coorg homestay experiences		1000-2000 INR
Biryani meals	Hyderabad's famous rice dishes		200-400 INR
Overall daily	Budget trip with family or couple		3000-5000 INR/day

Total: Varies by region

One last thing

Ferries essential to Andamans; roads in South vary from coastal to mountain passes.

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