



(Top) The guesthouse on Bhavani Island; (Middle) The Mogalarajpuram Caves; (Above) Vijayawada all lit up for the night!

that by performing this *pooja*, the wife's soul could get salvation. If you are unable to attend in person you can opt for *Gowri Pooja*, *Ganga Pooja*, *Musivayanam*, *Vidhistanam* and *Pindapradanam*.

LOOKING AROUND

While you are here, soaking in the religious festivities, you can also look around the place. The Mogalarajpuram Caves dating back to the 5th century CE is an old Mughal

monument. With five rock cut sanctuaries, the caves have well defined idols of Lord Nataraja and Ganesh in one of the caves.

The Kanaka Durga Temple perched atop the Indrakeeladri Hill is known for its self-manifested deity and is among the largest temples here. Thronged by devotees, this is the most important of all religious sites in this part of town.

The Gandhi Hill or Gandhi

Stupa is another popular attraction in Vijayawada, home to a mammoth 16 metre tall Gandhi statue and seven stupas 150 meters tall. Named after Mahatma Gandhi, the memorial's walls are inscribed with Gandhi's teachings. You can also browse through a well-stocked library and a planetarium. A Sound and Light show in the evening is a great way to see the life and teachings of Mahatma Gandhi. This is where you can get a bird's eye view of the city and kids can enjoy a toy train ride too.

Kondapalli village is situated 16 kilometres from Vijayawada. A 7th century fort on the hill with an impressive three storeyed rock tower was witness to the glory of many dynasties. It is famous for Kondapallibommalu (Kondapally toys). Chiselled out of locally available special light softwood called Tella Poniki and painted with vegetable dyes and vibrant enamel colours.

Another trip that you can take is to the 133 acre Bhavani Island with its mangroves, gardens, woodlands, meadows and water bodies. This is a good place for a family picnic and is close to Prakasam Barrage. You can enjoy activities like boating, swimming pools, water sports, fishing and angling.

So what are you waiting for? Head to Vijayawada for a one of its kind experience – after all, the Pushkaram only happens once in 12 years and waiting for the next one will be a long wait! ■

HOW TO GET THERE

Vijayawada is a part of Air Costa's network. For Air Costa flight details and timings, please refer to the 'Flight Schedule' pages at the end of this magazine.