

Royal Musings

Did you know that the Mysore Palace sees almost as much footfall as the Taj Mahal? One visit to the Palace and you are bound to be mesmerised by its sheer grandeur and impeccable maintenance that transports you to a bygone era.

Text & Photos: BINDU GOPAL RAO



Mysore or Mysuru as it is now known, is a city that is steeped in royalty, heritage and culture and is today morphing into a cosmopolitan city. Yet it merges these diverse attributes beautifully to create an ethos like no other. Given its proximity to Bengaluru, Coorg, Bandipur, Hassan and more, this is one city that must be on your itinerary on your next visit to Karnataka.

Sights & Sounds

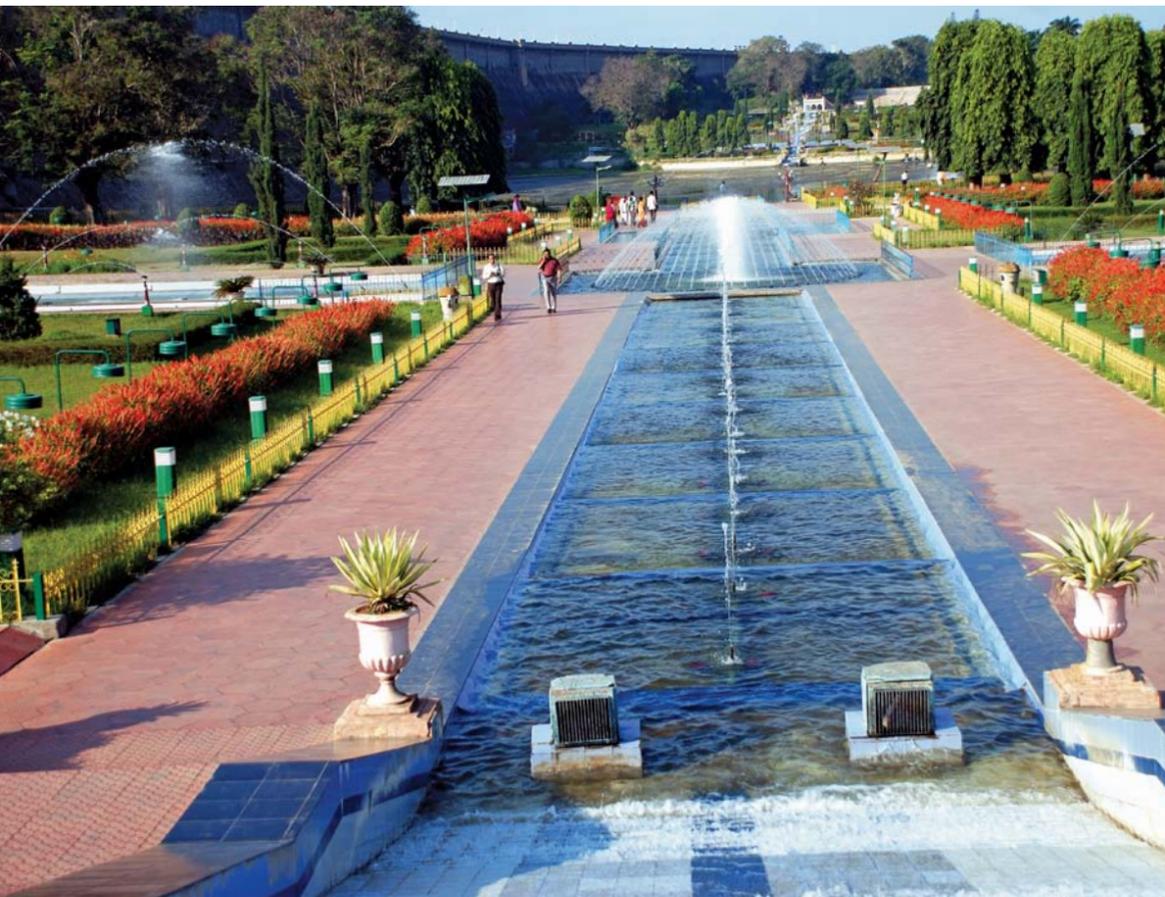
The city is located at the base of the Chamundi Hills, atop which is the famed Chamundeshwari Temple. Patronised for centuries by Maharajahs of Mysore, the idol of goddess Chamundi is carried

by the main elephant that leads the annual Dasara celebrations. The shape of the hill visible from all over the city is said to be the body of the demon Mahishasura who was killed by the goddess Chamundeswari. The drive up to the temple is scenic and if you are lucky you could spot a wild leopard on the way. Or if you are up to it, you can climb up the 1,000 steps to reach the hill top. The temple itself has an ornate 40 m-high entrance gateway, but the place is usually very crowded and you may need to wait for several hours in a queue before you can get in. Do stop to marvel at the huge monolithic Nandi statue enroute the temple.

After paying obeisance here, you could head to the

Chamarajendra Zoological Garden, that has a history dating back to 1892 and was started by the erstwhile king of Mysuru. Unlike other zoos, there is an interaction programme where people can pay and adopt animals and also involve themselves in conservation efforts. The best way to get around the place is to hire an electric buggy.

Adjoining the zoo is the Karanji Lake that is said to attract several migratory birds and also has boating facilities. It also houses a butterfly park, children's corner, watch tower and India's largest walk-through aviary. The Kukkarahalli Lake is another place for avid bird watchers. Located in Mysuru University Campus, during the migratory season the



Pic by Dilip Banerjee

AMAZING FACTS



Mysore Masala Dosa: A dosa with a red chutney and simple potato curry with loads of ghee.



Mysore Pak: A traditional sweet dish made with gram flour, sugar and ghee.

Mysore Bonda: A traditional snack, these are deep fried dumplings made with flour, yoghurt and spices.



Mysore Silk: Known for its silk, the Mysore silk sarees are quite expensive as they are woven with real gold and silver threads!

lake plays host to a variety of winged visitors and you can enjoy nature in its pristine beauty, while strolling on the walkway on the periphery of the lake.

If you are an architecture aficionado, the city has many historical and charming buildings. The 1805 built Government House, the 1927 Silver Jubilee Clock Tower facing the north gate of the Maharaja's Palace and the 1994 Rangacharlu Memorial Hall, all stand testimony to this. Special mention must be made of St. Philomena's Cathedral in neo-Gothic style that dates back to 1933 and has some stunningly beautiful stained-glass windows.

Royalty Matters

Being one of the few cities with a royal heritage, on your must-do list should be the beautiful Mysore Palace located in the midst of the city. Built between 1897-1912, the palace is a majestic three storied structure in Indo-Saracenic style with beautifully designed square towers at cardinal points that are covered with domes. While photography is prohibited indoors, you can still see some important places like the Durbar Hall with its ornate ceiling and sculpted pillars and the Kalyanamantapa which has glazed tiled flooring and stained glass and a domed ceiling. The golden howdah (or elephant seat), rare paintings, the jewel encrusted golden throne are part of the items on display.

The palace is illuminated on Sundays, public holidays and during the Dasara celebrations for some time in the evening and this is when the palace transforms almost magically. The Jaganmohan Palace houses an art gallery located on the west of the main palace. The main door of this museum is ornate with intricate carvings and was started in 1915. Housing the famed Mysuru style painting, you will find some rare original paintings and artefacts here. The original oil paintings of Raja Ravi Varma of Travancore are also on display here. Artefacts made from



THE JAGANMOHAN PALACE HOUSES AN ART GALLERY THAT INCLUDES THE ORIGINAL OIL PAINTINGS OF RAJA RAVI VARMA OF TRAVANCORE, AMONG OTHER TREASURES



IF YOU WANT TO EXPLORE THE LOCAL CULTURE, HEAD TO THE DEVARAJA MARKET THAT DATES BACK TO TIPU SULTAN'S REIGN AND IS GREAT FOR PHOTOGRAPHY

glass, ceramic and metal as well as a big collection of clocks is on display here.

City Sights

Mysuru is also home to the Brindavan Gardens that is located on the outskirts. The Krishnaraja Sagar reservoir across the River Cauvery is a wonderful example of illuminated terrace gardens and was the brainchild of Sir M Visveshwaraiah and Sir Mirza M Ismail. The gardens have a Mughal pattern with garden paths and symmetric fountains. With a children's park, a fisheries station and a hydraulic research station, the big draw here is the musical fountain show in the evening. My pick however is the charming Rail

Museum located behind the train station. An open-air museum, it exhibits several steam engines as well as the Mysore Maharani's saloon, a wood-panelled beauty that dates back to 1899. A toy train ride is a must do while you are here.

If you want to explore the local culture, head to the Devaraja Market that dates back to Tipu Sultan's reign. A lively bazaar, check out the famed local flowers, spices, betel leaves and conical piles of coloured powder. While you can get some great photographs, you can also shop at the market.

Mysuru is a charming getaway and there is much to see here, so what are you waiting for? Go discover. 

AMAZING FACTS



Mysore Peta: This is a traditional headgear worn by royalty and is today a common way of honouring people.



Mysore Mallige: This is a special variety of the jasmine flower with a distinct fragrance that has been patented and registered under Intellectual Property Rights!



Mysore Painting: While it might resemble its popular cousin, the Tanjore painting, these paintings have more delicate lines, graceful designs and use of pure gold work.



Mysuru is almost 150 km from Bengaluru. Trujet has direct flights to Bengaluru from Hyderabad and Vijayawada and easy connections from destinations across its network.



Did You Know?

 The Wodeyars ruled the Kingdom of Mysore between 1399-1761, and 1799-1947. The Wodeyars of Mysore is the only Indian Royal family in the history of India to have ruled a kingdom for more than 500 years.

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