



From top: The Borra Caves; and Ramakrishna Beach

resembles a dolphin's nose and juts into the sea. A lighthouse is located here and this also happens to be a vantage point with a splendid view of the sea. This is where you will see a temple, mosque and church close to one another and this was an 18th century British army base camp.

The Visakhapatnam Port is the only port in Andhra Pradesh and a visit to the fishing harbour here makes for an interesting experience. The cacophony of sights, sounds and smell here may seem like an assault on your senses initially but walk further in and you will get used to them. This is where you will

see brisk business between the fisherfolk and vendors. Dried fish is a big draw too and the people are quite friendly and will happily pose for photographs.

Kaushik Mukherji, Lead Consultant, Andhra Pradesh Tourism, is gung-ho about Visakhapatnam. "After Tirupati, Visakhapatnam is the best bet we have to attract travellers; therefore, we are always looking at ways to improve our local product. Being a beach and hill city, we are about to begin India's longest beachfront promenade, a mammoth work over 30 km from RK Beach to all the way down to Bhimili. We will soon have an academy to learn and earn a professional certificate in watersports and aero sports coming up not very far from the city. Also Lambasinghi, our zero degree hill station, is getting ready with brand new accommodation in the next few months."

When in Visakhapatnam, do visit Kailasagiri, a hilltop park with a bird's eye view of the scenic East Coast and city – it can be accessed by road as well as ropeway trolleys. This place is huge and you can see a large statue of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati, a small toy train for children, a gigantic floral clock and more. There are some cafes here as well that serve small bites.

You can also explore a serene fishing village on Bheemili beach easily accessible by road from Vizag. Located about 90 km away from the city are the Borra Caves that date back to over 150 million years old. These ancient karstic limestone caves are believed to be one of the largest in the country and are located at a height of 1400m above sea level. The caves are lit artificially in bright colours and are best explored with the help of a guide who will indicate the important stalagmite and stalactite formations.

THE DIVINITY OF ANNAVARAM

No trip to Andhra Pradesh is complete without a visit to The Sri Veera Venkata Satyanarayana Swamy Vari Devasthanam at Annavaram village in East Godavari district, Andhra Pradesh. One of the most famous holy shrines in India, here are some of its unique features.

- The temple is built in Dravidian style and holds the second most prominent position in Andhra Pradesh after Tirupati.
- The presiding deity is Lord Satyadeva with his consort Sri Anantha Lakshmi on one side and Lord Siva on the other side.
- The temple attracts pilgrims of both Vishanava and Saiva sects.
- The holy village is located two miles from Annavaram Railway Station on the Vijayawada-Visakhapatnam broad gauge section of the South Central Railway.
- Annavaram is 120 km away from Visakhapatnam and 80 km from Rajahmundry.
- The Devasthanam administration arranges comfortable stay of the pilgrims at the Ratnagiri and Satyagiri Hills.
- Sri Satyanarayana Swamy Vari Devasthanam is famous for performing Satyanarayana Swamy Vratams.
- Traditionally these vratams are performed by newly-wedded couples.
- All pooja samagri except coconuts and bananas are provided by the Devasthanam including Sri Swamy Vari Prasadam.

SHUTTERSTOCK

