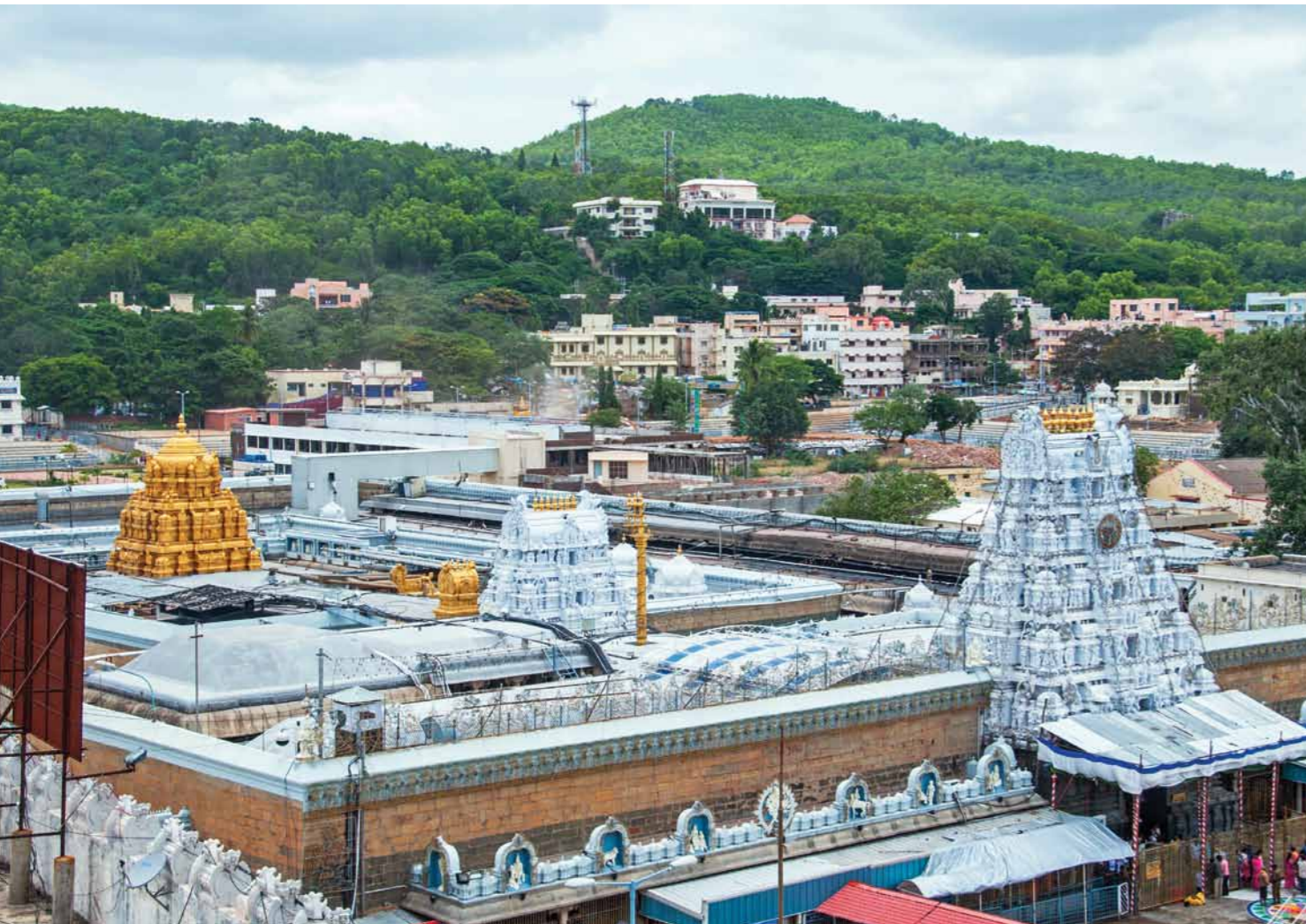


# Spiritual Sojourn

Holding historical importance, Tirupati is a famous pilgrimage centre of the Hindus and is popularly known as the temple town. It is known to offer immense peace to both mind and soul.

Words: BINDU GOPAL RAO



If there is one temple in the world that attracts the most number of devotees and visitors it has to be the Venkateswara Swamy Temple at Tirumala, Tirupati. Said to be the richest temple in the world, there is a sense of power and faith that permeates through the serpentine queues that give you a fleeting glimpse of the Lord. Tirupati, however, is home to many other temples and sights as well which must be on your itinerary the next time you are in this pilgrim town.

## Sri Padmavathi Ammavari Temple

Also called the Alamelu Mangapuram Temple, this place is located 5 km away from Tirupati and is dedicated to Goddess Padmavathi, the wife of Sri Venkateswara Swamy. It is widely believed that you must visit this temple before you head to the temple atop Tirumala. This place is also extremely crowded and it is advisable that you get a special darshan ticket which will also include a small pooja and allow you some time near the sanctorum. The idol of the Goddess is magnificent, in the form of a bride. There are special poojas held during the days of the Navarathri Festival. Another important festival associated with this temple is the boat festival locally called Theppotsavam, which happens for five days during the month of Jyeshtha in June.



**VENKATESWARA MUSEUM ALSO HAS A HUGE COLLECTION OF STONE, WOOD AND METAL IMAGES, AS WELL AS POTTERY, COINS, INSCRIPTIONS AND ARTICLES USED FOR PUJAS**

## Sri Govinda Raja Swamy Temple

The outer pinnacle called Gaali Gopuram of this temple complex is tall and its ornate structure is visible from a fairly long distance. It is believed that Saint Ramanujacharya laid foundation of the temple in 1130 AD. This is like a huge complex of temples and apart from Sri Govindaraja Swamy it also houses the shrines

of Andal Ammavaru, Sri Krishna, Sri Ramanuja Thirumangai Alwar, Sri Vedanta Desika, Sri Lakshmi and Sri Manevala Mahamunlu. You will need to deposit all electronic items including cameras and mobiles at the locker before entering the temple. The celestial bath to the idol called Abishekam is not conducted to the presiding deity as the idol is made of clay. There is a bustling market place around



this place that sells souvenirs and memorabilia. If you are lucky, you can spot the two temple elephants that are brought out at specific times and will bless you in return for a coin. What is of particular interest is the Sri Venkateswara Museum on temple art that is located in the adjoining building. This is a building with a well laid out garden and has a collection of pictures, sculptures, artefacts and musical instruments. The museum has a huge collection of stone, wood and metal images, as well as pottery, coins, inscriptions and articles used for poojas.



### Chandragiri Fort

Dating back a thousand years, the Chandragiri Fort is about 15 km west of Tirupati and has connections with the Vijayanagar Empire. The palace has restored lawns and gardens in the Rani Mahal. The Raja Mahal is now a museum of bronze and stone sculptures from Andhra Pradesh. The palace has three storeys and a durbar hall in the middle. The fort is a good representation of the Indo-saracenic architecture from the Vijayanagar period. The crowning towers have Hindu architectural elements and the palace was constructed using stone, brick and



### INTERESTING FACTS



Sri Kapileswara Swamy Temple is the only temple dedicated to Lord Shiva in Tirupati. It has a large tank of sacred water which is believed to flow from the right toe of the Lord.

Located about 60 kilometres from Tirupati, the Sri Kanipakam Vinayaka Swamy temple is renowned for its self manifested idol of Lord Ganesha. This is also amongst one of the rare temples of Lord Ganesha as the devotees believe the idol here is growing.



Carvings at Sri Venkateswara Museum of Temple Art

lime mortar. The ornate pillars have intricate carvings on them. The upper part of the fort on the hillside is not open for visitors. If you are here in the evening, you can catch the sound and light show that showcases the rich history of Chandragiri. The fort is closed on Fridays.

### ISKCON Temple

If you are looking for a contemporary interpretation of religion, head to the ornate ISKCON

temple, a beautiful white and golden hued building. The idols of Lord Krishna in pristine white and decked with silver coloured garments and jewellery make for a dazzling sight. In fact, there are a total of ten forms of the Lord in their pristine beauty and the white colour adds a sense of calm to this temple. The magnificently carved temple also has a restaurant and a guest house within its sprawling complex.

There is also a garden of Tulsi pots called Tulsivanam; that has a variety of basil plants.

### Talakona Waterfall

This is one of the highest water falls in Andhra Pradesh. Located 30 km inside the Nalamala forest, you will need to trek close to two kilometres to approach the waterfalls. You can also take a boat ride here, swim or if you feel more adventurous, the 240-metre walk on the canopy rope would be a good option. Located in the vicinity is the Lord Siddheswara Swamy Temple.

### Sri Venkateswara Temple

The massive temple is spread over an area of 2.2 acres of land and is located on the south of Swami Pushkarini River at a height of 3,200 ft above sea level. The best way to get a glimpse of the Lord is to book online on their website and be present at the correct gate, 15 minutes before the specified time. While it might seem like an eternity before you get jostled and pushed at the temple, one look at the deity is sure to leave you filled with a sense of fulfilment. It really is a one-of-its-kind experience. <sup>17</sup>



## Did You Know?



Sri Kalahasthi Temple, 40 km away from Tirupati, is home to Vaayu Linga. One of the oil lamps in the sanctorum is said to constantly flicker while other lamps remain motionless.



### Pre-book excess baggage

Ancillary Description	Kg	Amount
Excess Baggage	05 Kg	1375
Excess Baggage	10 Kg	2500
Excess Baggage	15 Kg	3750
Excess Baggage	20 Kg	5000

### Hurry is burry

All will land safe right away, a second or two, or five later!

