

Weekends are meant for travel

PICS: BINDU GOPAL RAO

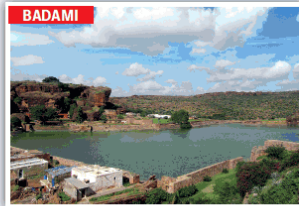
If you haven't made your New Year resolution yet, here's a suggestion. With 20 long weekends coming up in 2020, you may just want to make travel your resolution. And we have you covered with destinations you can explore

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January

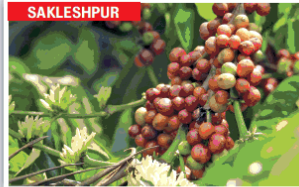
The Sankranti weekend is a good time to plan your first break in the year. Start off with a vacation in Coorg, the Scotland of India. Trek in the Shola forests at Tadiandamol for stunning views of coffee plantations. Stop at Bhagamandala (the birth place of the river Cauvery) and Bylakuppe, to pay obeisance at the Golden temple at Namdroling. Interact with the gentle elephants at the Dubare Wildlife Camp or go on a safari in Nagarhole Wildlife Sanctuary.

February



With pleasant weather continuing, it's the right time to visit Badami (445 km from the Bengaluru). Explore the four beautifully carved cave temples or indulge in rock climbing and rappelling. At Aihole, and Pattadakal you'll find more temples belonging to Hindu, Jain and Buddhist faiths. Or you could go to Hampi, a UNESCO World Heritage site during the annual Hampi festival. The stone chariot at the Vittala Temple Complex and nine-tiered Virupaksha temple whose tower faces the famous Hampi Bazaar, the Royal enclosure with the 100-pillared king's audience hall, a tank, an underground chamber and the Mahanavami Dibba are other sights not to be missed here.

HAMPI



March

Sakleshpur (220 km from Bengaluru) is a good option to head for the hills during the Holi weekend. Drench yourself in the lush green colours of a coffee estate and experience a coffee harvest. Located close by is the Manjarabad Fort, with stunning views of the Western Ghats and the Sakleshwara Temple, a fine example of Hoysala architecture. Tip: The Bisle View Point is Instagram worthy.

April



Drive down to Hassan (183 km from Bengaluru) which is a treasure trove of Hoysala architecture and sculpture. On your list of must-see places should be India's second largest earth dam at Gorur as well as the twin temples of Nageshwara and Channakeshava in Mosale that are believed to be prototypes of temples in Belur and Halebidu. Don't miss the stunning ruins of the 18th century Shettyhalli Church located on the banks of the River Hemavathi.



SRIRANGAPATNA FORT



CHIKKAMAGALURU

May 1 (Friday, Labour Day); May 2 (Saturday); May 3 (Sunday)

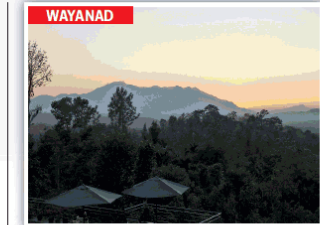
May has many long weekends. On the Labour Day weekend, plan a trip to Srirangapatna (120 km from Bengaluru). This is a page out of history with every building, street and garden associated with Tipu Sultan. Put Dariya Daulat Bagh, Gumbaz, the ruins of the Lal Mahal Palace and the Srirangapatna Fort built by Timmanna Nayaka in 1454. Chikkamagaluru (245 km from Bengaluru), Karnataka's coffee belt is also famous for the Baba Budangiri hills (named after the saint who is believed to have brought coffee to India). Trek to the Kudremukh National Park and stop by the Kallathigiri Falls, Hanumana Gundi

Falls and Hebhe Falls. You could also escape to the cool confines of Kotagiri (302 km from Bengaluru) a lesser known town in the Nilgiri Biosphere. The hill town is home to Pethakal Bungalow, the residence of John Sullivan, the founder of the British settlement at Ooty which now houses his memorial. For a stunning view of the hills, head to the Kodanad view point where you can spot the resident bird of the region, the pied bushchat. A walk in the tea gardens will lead to a vantage point to watch the double cascade Catherine waterfall. The St Luke's English Church and the St Mary's Church are some other places to stop by.

Watch a beautiful sunset at Sri Ramadevara Dam. Kabini (210 km from Bengaluru) is a unique wildlife reserve with a royal seal of approval. The Maharaja of Mysore used this as his private hunting grounds. The river Kabini flows through the national park and attracts all kinds of animals, from the majestic elephants to tiny colourful birds. A holiday here is not complete without a jeep safari or a boat safari. Carry a camera along because you are sure to spot elephants, Chital, Sambar, Gaur, Wild pig and the Langur. The backwaters of the river is a great place for bird watchers too. You can also take guided walks with naturalists which is a great way to learn about the local flora and fauna.

June

Wayanad (280 km from Bengaluru) is home to Edakkal caves with cave art dating back to 6000 BC. The Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary is also a tourist favourite. Head to Kuruva Island for a spot of rafting or boat-



WAYANAD

ing and Chembra Peak for a trek. The Banasura Sagar Dam is a great spot for photos and is set amidst lush landscapes. Put on your walking shoes for a long walk. Also stop by at the Pookode Lake, a perennial fresh water lake and the three tiered Meenmuttery Waterfalls

Look out for Part II of the weekend getaway destinations