



# JUST NOT GLITZ

Silicon Valley of India, Garden City, Pensioners' Paradise, Science City, Pub City – Bengaluru is all this, and much more.

BY BINDU GOPAL RAO

**B**engaluru's sobriquets may seem never-ending. But it is also a city that regularly tops surveys of being the best city in India courtesy its cosmopolitan nature that seamlessly blends the traditional with the contemporary. It also has one of the best weather (at least most of the time) compared to most other places in India. Located at an altitude of 3,000 ft above sea level, Bengaluru, the capital of Karnataka, enjoys a salubrious climate throughout the year. History has it that the city was established by Kempe Gowda, a feudal ruler of the Vijayanagara empire, who built a mud fort believed to be the foundation of the city. History came around a full circle three years ago when the country's third busiest airport was renamed as the Kempe Gowda International Airport (KIA). Here's a quick walk-through in 48 hours of some of the interesting parts of the city.

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Check out the heritage sites and take a trip down memory lane.



**7:00 A.M.**  
**DOSA AT VIDYARTHI BHAVAN**

Started in 1943-44 (yes that is right), Vidyarthi Bhavan is the place to start your sojourn in Bengaluru. Arguably the best masala dosas are prepared here using a traditional recipe that is a closely guarded secret. What started off as a small canteen to cater to students of nearby schools and colleges (which explains its name), this modest eatery is still going strong. What sets it apart is the taste that has been maintained intact over all these years. Also the interiors have undergone minor renovations but there is still an old world nostalgic charm that you can sense while you are here. There is usually a queue to get in so make sure you arrive early. The facility is small but maintains the highest standards of hygiene. While you are here try the other South Indian staples Rave Vade, Khara Bath, Kesari Bath, Uddina Vade, Idly, Poori Sagu and traditional filter coffee.



**9:00 A.M.**  
**LALBAGH BOTANICAL GARDENS**

One of the best lung spaces in the city, the Lalbagh Botanical Garden has royal origins and was initially the private garden of Hyder Ali, father of Tipu Sultan. This was further developed by several British and Indian doyens of horticulture and is currently under the aegis of the Directorate of Horticulture, Government of Karnataka. A green oasis in the heart of the city, it is today an internationally renowned centre for scientific study of plants and botanical



Lalbagh Botanical Gardens was the private garden of HyderAli

*Lalbagh Botanical Gardens is known for the scientific study of plants and botanical artwork*

artwork and also conservation of plants. Spread over 240 acre, this is where you will see morning walkers by the droves and some of the most stunningly colourful flowers. If you are in Bengaluru around Republic Day or Independence Day, the flower show is a must-see. With well-laid out roads, paths, open spaces and a vast variety of flora and fauna, Lalbagh can be accessed through four approach gates. Within Lalbagh, you must visit the Glass House whose design is based on the lines of the Crystal Palace of England. The Bandstand, Lecture Hall, Lalbagh House, Pigeon House, Statue of Sri Chamaraja Wodeyar, the Directorate Building, Lalbagh West Gate Guard Room, the Museum and Cottage which now house some of the department offices, main gate of Lalbagh (Cameron gate), Deer Paddock, Aquarium building, Aviary and Kempegowda Tower are other structures to see. My favourite however is the Lalbagh Lake which



Tipu Sultan's Summer Palace is made of teak wood

attracts several migratory birds in the season. A tree fossil believed to be 20 million years old is also on display.



**10:30 A.M.**  
**SUMMER PALACE & BANGALORE FORT**

The summer palace of Tipu Sultan is like no other palace as it is neither very large nor ornate. However this retreat is stunningly beautiful and the two storeys made with teak wood have exquisitely carved pillars, arches and balconies. An example of Indo-Islamic architecture, the walls and wooden ceilings of Tipu's favourite retreat are painted in floral motifs in pastel colours. Construction of the palace was started in 1781 by Nawab Hyder Ali Khan and completed in 1791

by Tipu Sultan. On either side of the palace you can see well maintained gardens that lead to its main entrance. It is said that Tipu Sultan used to conduct the affairs of the state from the eastern and western balconies of the upper floor and this was later used by the British as their secretariat till 1867. The next level has chambers and balconies that can be reached by four staircases with the central portion being a large hall that leads to four smaller rooms. These rooms were considered as the *zenana* or women's quarters that is now a museum with artefacts relating to the Hyder-Tipu regime. You can also opt for a guide service to help you understand this place better.

Located close by is the Bangalore Fort said to have been originally built as a mud fort by Kempe Gowda in 1537 A.D. Hyder Ali, Tipu Sultan's father, later converted it into a stone fort and this has witnessed the struggle of the Mysore empire against the British. The fort has five intricately sculpted arches and there is a temple dedicated to Lord Ganesha inside the fort.



**12:30 P.M.**  
**LUNCH AT SOCIAL**  
**CHURCH STREET**

If you are looking to experience Bengaluru's hip and vibrant vibe,

head to Social on Church Street for a quick bite. The massive #Connect painted on the exposed brick wall is really Social's philosophy to get people to connect offline. Spread over 6,000 sq ft across two floors with a bar in each section, there is also a separate smoking zone. The design is quirky with boxes made of rulers to hold sauces, wooden benches, jute cushions, concrete pillars and industrial piping, water glasses with 'paani' printed on them and even a toilet paper roll that dispenses paper napkins! The menu is extensive and comes in a rolled up tabloid newspaper style - colour coded grey for the food menu and blue for the drinks. Expect drama in the food and drinks - they serve Long Island Ice Tea in a foot long beaker and shooters are

served in giant syringes. Children will like Saddlebags - pancakes stuffed with bacon, chicken sausages and topped off with eggs and maple syrup on the side. Also try the Elvis Presley French Toast where thick slices of bread are soaked in peanut butter and French toast batter, fried and served with bananas with a dusting of sugar and served on a vinyl record. The Anda Shammi kebab with a mozzarella and red onion stuffing for a twist is served in between a *pav* with some mint chutney on the side. The menu is full of surprises, so try it out yourself.

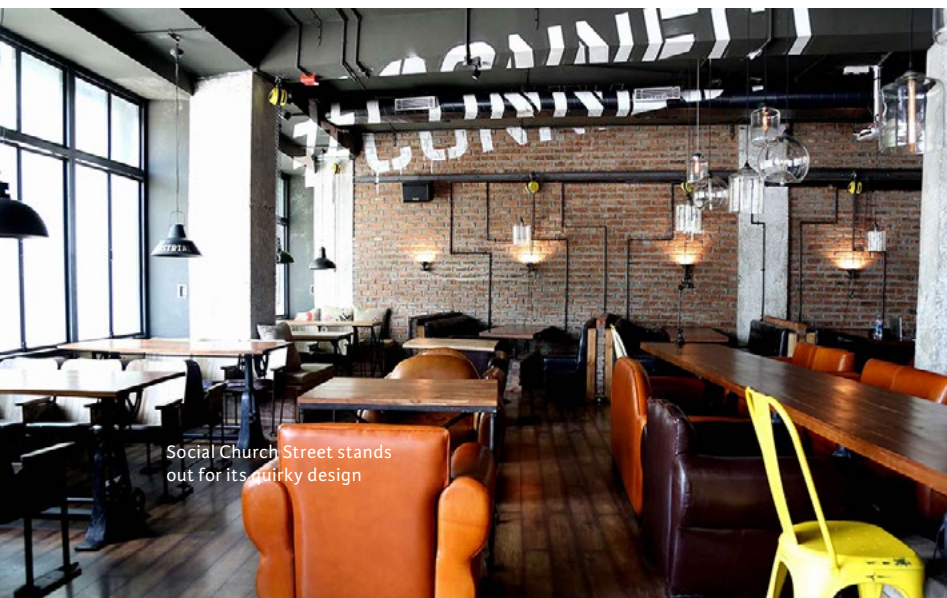


**3:00 P.M.**  
**BANNERGHATTA**  
**BIOLOGICAL PARK**

If you love wildlife and want to catch a glimpse of some wonderful animals,



Former Australian cricketer Brett Lee points out to a white tiger at the Bannerghatta Biological Park



Social Church Street stands out for its quirky design

the Bannerghatta Biological Park, an integral part of Bannerghatta National Park, must be on your itinerary. What makes it unique is that it is one of the places which is close to the city and yet has preserved its wilderness. This place has a Zoo, Safari, Butterfly Park and Rescue Center that helps in conservation of captive animals. While you are here take the Grand Safari (this covers the Tiger, Lion, Bear and Herbivore safari) through the Ragihalli Reserve Forest and to see wild animals at close quarters.



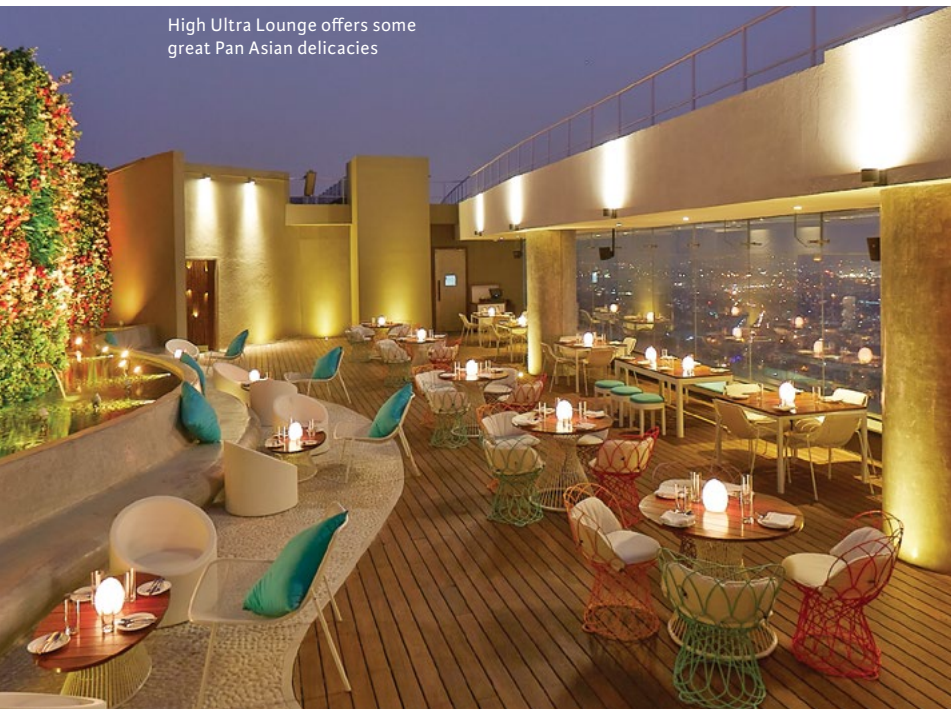
Also the newer addition, the Butterfly Park is an interesting sight mainly set up to sustain the local butterfly population and is also a research and captive breeding laboratory. Spread across an area of 7.5 acres, the butterfly trail is about one kilometre long. The innovatively designed place has three dome structures housing the conservatory, museum and the multi-media centre. The park is open between 9.30 am and 5 pm on all days except the weekly holiday on Tuesday.



**8:00 P.M.**  
**DINNER AT HIGH ULTRA LOUNGE**

High Ultra Lounge at Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Hotel is south India's tallest rooftop restaurant and is spread over a lavish 10,000 sq ft. A modern Asian bar and restaurant, this is where you can get some fantastic views of the city while you munch on gourmet food. Blending the views with sensuous interiors, the lounge raises the bar in more ways than one. It offers classic Pan Asian food including beverages that use contemporary mixology to create concoctions flavoured with natural spices and herbs.

High Ultra Lounge offers some great Pan Asian delicacies



**7:00 A.M.**



**BREAKFAST AT THE EGG FACTORY JP NAGAR**

If you love eggs and think of them as a great breakfast option, head to The Egg Factory (incidentally they have several branches in Bengaluru). The best part is that the ambience is casual and relaxed which makes it a perfect way to start your day. And make no mistake, the egg is served with a twist and is served in the form of different cuisines. So if you have the staple egg burji or sunny side up at one end you also have a Japanese style chicken, bacon and eggs. The menu has a wide variety of egg dishes and for those who do not prefer egg, there are a plethora of vegetarian options as well. Choose from a variety of omelettes, egg chilli, egg paratha, Malabar egg combo and even the broccoli mushroom omelette which is quite a hit here. You can also try the egg curry, and different types of stuffed omletes. Also on the menu are some interesting smoothies and mocktails.



The Dodda Ganesha Temple is known for its gigantic idol



**10:00 A.M.**  
**DODDA GANESHA TEMPLE & BUGLE ROCK**

A major landmark in Bengaluru, this temple has a huge idol of Lord Ganesha that is 18 feet in height and 16 feet wide. Legend has it that the idol was growing and *pujas* had been performed to stop it growing. The idol is stunning thanks to its size and special kinds of decorations are done here. One of the most popular ones is the butter coating (*Benne Alankara*) that uses over 100 kilograms of butter. In the same premises is the Dodda Basavana Gudi (or the Nandi Temple) - a massive bull, a close devotee and attendant of Shiva. Said to be the biggest temple dedicated to Nandi in the world, the black stone monolith has a height of 15 feet and length of 20 feet and is highly revered. During the last week of November to coincide with the Hindu month of Karthika, on the last Monday and Tuesday, a groundnut fair is held here. Locally called *Kadlekai Parishe*, groundnut sellers from nearby areas offer their first harvest to Nandi. Adjoining the temples is the Bugle Rock garden that is covered with trees and you can usually see and hear a number of bats perched on the trees. There is a water tank with motifs of famous people from Karnataka here.





The Biere Club has the  
ambience of an old  
world English cafe



**12:00 P.M.**  
**LUNCH AT**  
**THE BIERE CLUB**

Known for its finest craft beer, you must also experience Bengaluru pub culture by heading to its first craft brewery, The Biere Club, on Lavelle Road. They brew fresh and original beer in small batches, using the finest ingredients with traditional methods so you can enjoy your drink the right way. And to compliment the brews, check out the gastronomical experiences, excellent service and ambience of an old world English cafe for a perfect lunch. They have in fact recently launched a new concept called Weekday Work Lunches which offers a delicious spread of delicacies with a biere/mocktail to down it with between 12 and 3 pm, at Rs. 399 all

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inclusive. Else you can choose from their rather elaborate a-la-carte menu.



**3:00 P.M.**  
**VIDHANA SOUDHA AND**  
**SURROUNDING AREAS**

The state legislature, Vidhana Soudha, is a large building whose architecture has influences of Mysore Neo-Dravidian, Indo-Saracenic and Dravidian styles. The Vidhana Soudha has four floors above and one floor below ground level. The Karnataka government has constructed a replica of the same building called Vikasa Soudha to the south of the building which houses some of the ministries and legislative offices. At an imposing height of close to 46 m, there are 300 rooms that house 22 departments of the state government making it one of the most imposing structures in the city of Bengaluru.



**5:00 P.M.**  
**SHOP AT THE MANTRI**  
**SQUARE MALL**

Shopping must be on your agenda in Bengaluru and to chill, head to Mantri Square at Malleshwaram. The mall has a wide variety of stores for shopping, entertainment and dining spread over a massive 1.7 million sq.ft. With

over 10,000 brands across apparel, footwear, accessories and other lifestyle products and over 250 outlets retailing a wide variety of merchandise and offering the best of national and international brands, you will be spoiled for choice. And if you want a quick bite, there are close to 40 food and beverage options inside as well as a 6- theatre multiplex and parking for about 2,000 cars.

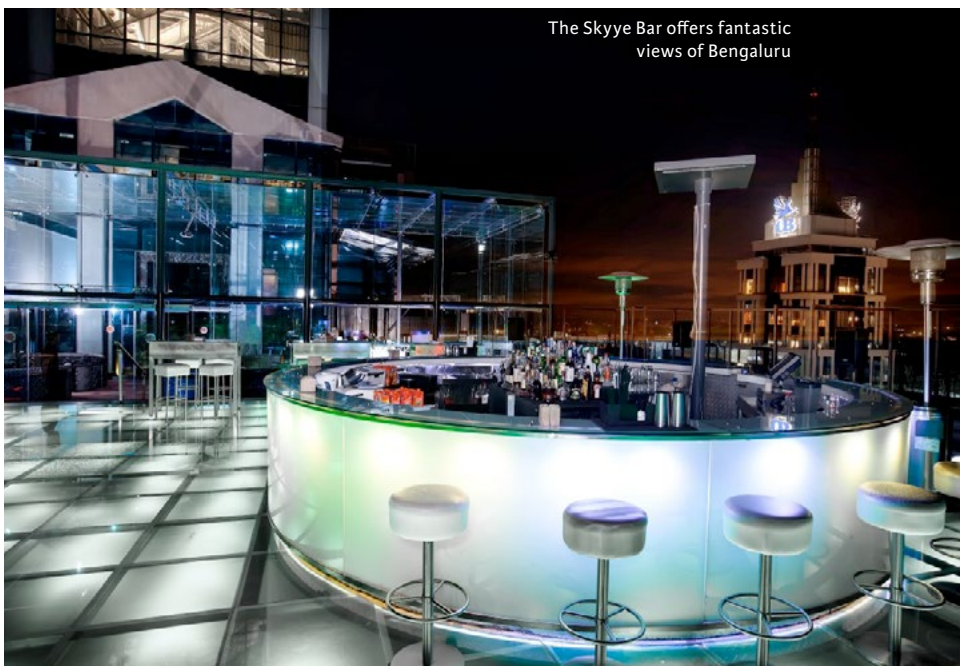


**8:00 P.M.**  
**DINNER AT SKYYE BAR**

To wind up your hectic day, head to Skyye Bar at UB City that offers the best views of the city in an ambience representative of the best the city has to offer. In fact when you are up here, it is hard to say if you are seeing the Manhattan skyline or Bengaluru's. With an open to the sky atmosphere, you can take advantage of the famed Bengaluru weather while you tuck into fine food and drinks. The food choice is good and Irish Chicken, BBQ Cottage Cheese, Twilight Bikinis are some recommended dishes. The salads are wholesome, the steak is thick and juicy and they do serve a delectable cheese platter apart from many Mediterranean and Indian dishes. ■



Vidhana Soudha houses  
22 departments of the  
state government



The Skyye Bar offers fantastic  
views of Bengaluru